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Adventure

TWO NOVELETTES

SPY MASTER

by ARED WHITE

TRING LUN'S TRAP

by CAPT. FREDERICK MOORE

COMMANDER ELLSBERG

LUKE SHORT

AND OTHERS

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Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 93. No. 3 September 1, 1935 Twice a Month

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Musket fire sounded above the roar of motors as the two launches maneuvered on the starlit waters of Lake Geneva. "It is the boat of the German spies," cried Captain Fox Elton's French pilot.

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Cover by Hubert Rogers *Illustrations by Neil O'Keeffe, I. B. Hazelton, Jon Blummer, H. Green*

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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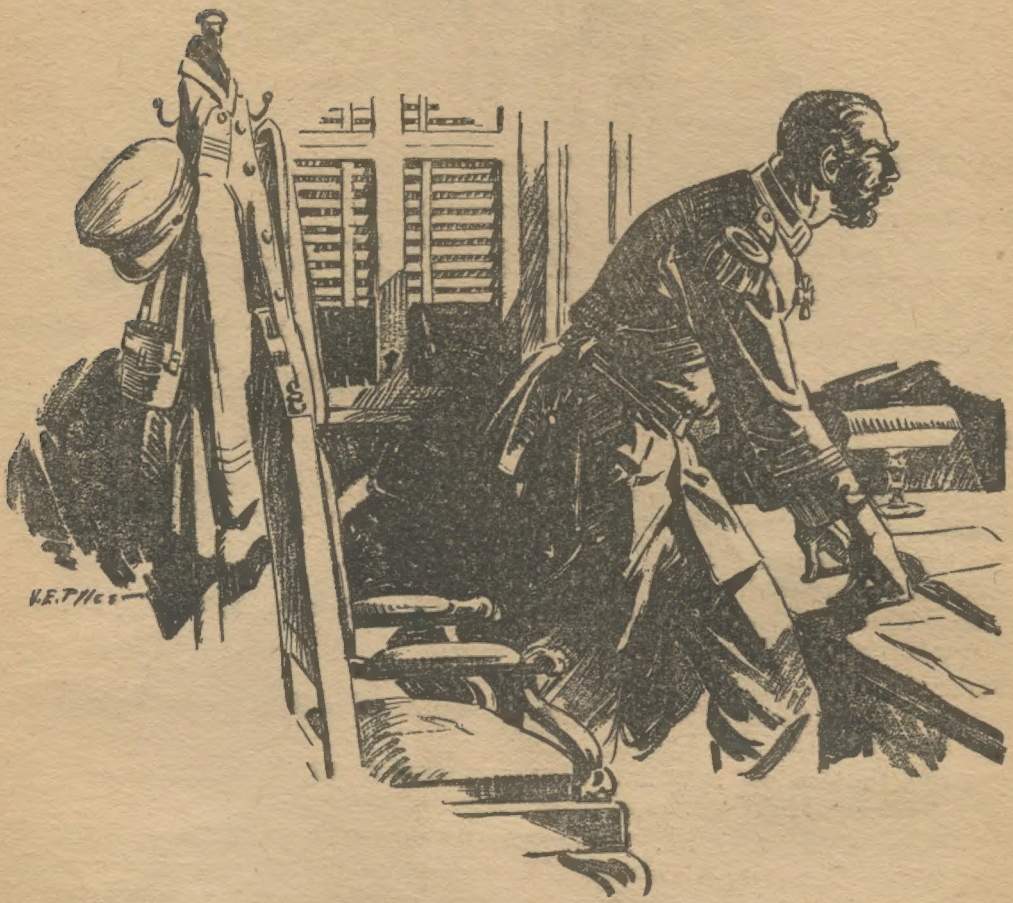
SPY MASTER



CHAPTER I

THE FORBIDDEN FRONTIER

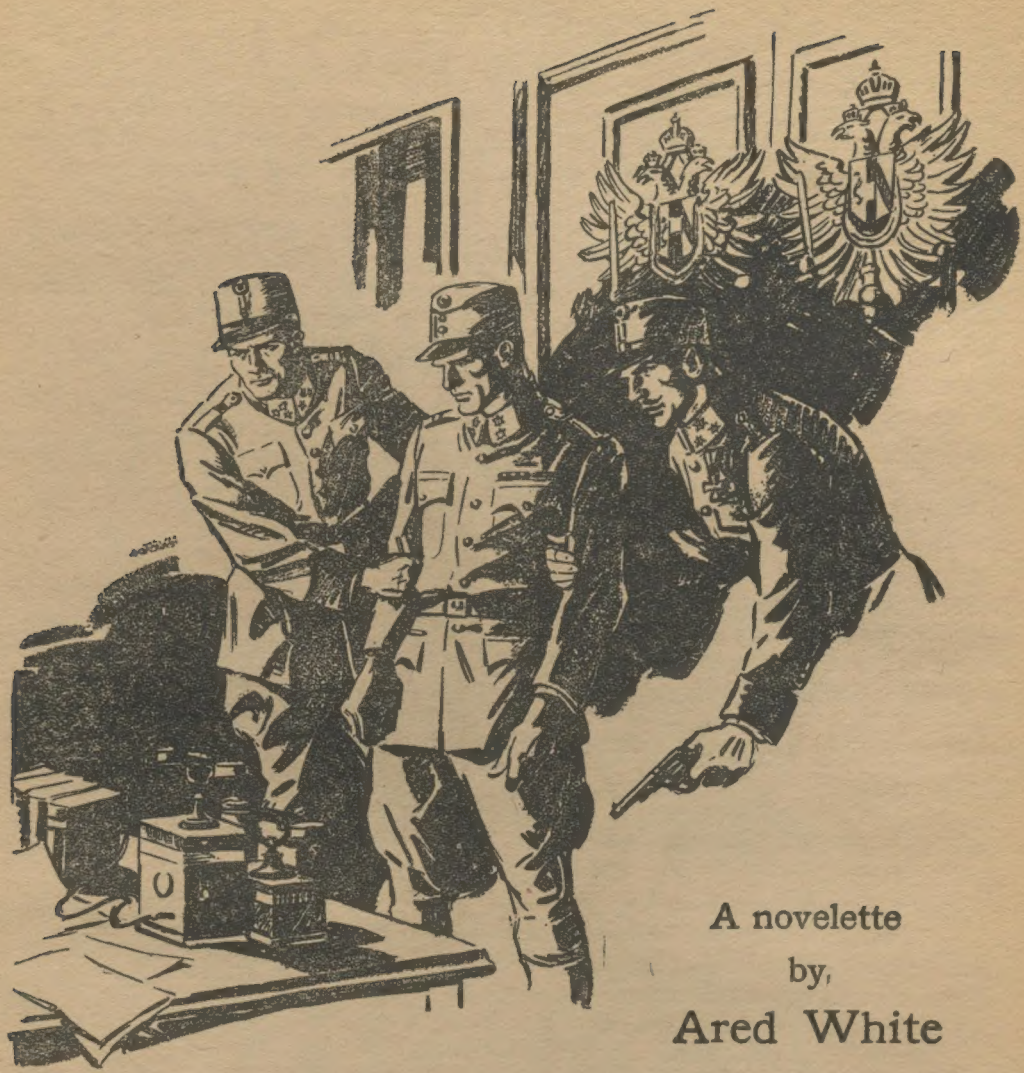
COLONEL RAND was stalking slowly back and forth across his private office when Captain Fox Elton entered in response to the buzzer summons from the American espionage chief. Rand, without appearing to notice the arrival of his star field operative, halted in front of a high French window and stared down from the old French caserne to the parade grounds where the headquarters battalion was forming for daily guard mounting.

Elton smiled as he noted the colonel's tension and guessed its reason. Such preoccupation and stress on the colonel's part could mean but one thing. The French were pressing him for help on that Berne-Vienna tangle, the most complicated and dangerous operation that had presented itself during the war and perhaps the most important.

"You sent for me, sir?" Elton spoke up.

Colonel Rand nodded slowly and returned to his desk with heavy solemnity.

"L'Ourcq wants you, Elton," he said presently. "The French insist we must open up the way to Vienna, even if it costs us our best agents."



A novelette
by,
Ared White

Captain Elton digested this announcement without change of expression except for a slight brightening of his level, blue eyes.

"Yes, sir. But if Austria is really fishing for a separate peace, we can't blame the French for being all stirred up," he replied. "That sounds like a game worth sitting in on, even if the odds appear a trifle high against us."

"I agree on the size of the stakes, Elton," Rand said heavily. "But in addition to the ordinary dangers to my men, if I should sit in, the thing is loaded with diplomatic dynamite—and I've decided to keep hands off. Colonel l'Ourcq is on his way here from Paris by plane. I intend to tell him very politely but very firmly: 'No.'"

"I understand, sir. But the French must intend forcing our hands, or the chief of their Deuxieme Bureau wouldn't be coming up in person. They may get the general to consent if—"

"Not a chance, Elton! Washington gave us a growl that last time I sent you to Switzerland. Reminded us that where neutral countries are involved the American command in France must keep fingers out of the pie."

"But Vienna, sir, is not in a neutral country."

"You are familiar enough with this Vienna case, Elton, to know that von Schlossner controls the situation perfectly from Switzerland. Until von Schlossner is out of the way, there's no reasonable chance of handling Vienna, and since Switzerland is forbidden soil so far as we're concerned, that lets us out, as I said before."

"Yes, sir," Elton agreed with polite detachment. "But it is too bad that we can't give them a little lift with this fellow von Schlossner. Anything further the Colonel wished to see me about?"

"Nothing, until I buzz for you, Captain. I want you in here as a witness to the conversation when L'Ourcq arrives. Naturally I wanted you to have my slant on the situation before we meet L'Ourcq. That's all."

"Yes, sir. I'll stand by in my office until you ring."

A suppressed smile shaped itself on Elton's mouth as he returned to his own little cubbyhole near by. At reaching his desk he rang at once for Lieutenant McGee, who had accompanied him on some of the stiffest of his spy quests, particularly the type where cool nerve and the implicit execution of exacting orders were required. McGee came in at once, eagerly searching the captain's face.

"How'd you like to take a chance on being interned in Switzerland for the duration of the war, McGee?" Elton inquired whimsically. "Or of having one of von Schlossner's agents catch you in the back at Berne?"

McGee, tall, lean and square of jaw, nodded, the light of a joyous vitality in his dark eyes at this hint of fresh adventure.

"You mean the colonel's sending us to the Swiss scene?"

"On the contrary, Colonel Rand just told me he'll have nothing to do with that Swiss-Vienna mess. Argues it is too dangerous, in view of Swiss neutrality. Therefore we are going to take a little vacation down on the Mediterranean—shoving off possibly early tomorrow."

McGee's brows knotted. He was unable to fathom the smile that played lightly across Elton's face.

"I'm not itching for any leave on the Mediterranean, Cap'n," he rejoined, "that is, if the Cap'n's speaking seriously."

"Never more serious in my life, McGee. Now what I want you to do is get our leave orders from the executive officer. Good for fifteen days."

"For both of us, sir?"

"Provided you are willing to take the chances I've already indicated—which means going into Switzerland without official authority. I needn't tell you the end of that trail, if we get slipped up."

There was another quick leap of joy in McGee's eyes.

"Yes'r!" he exclaimed. "I'm with you to the finish if that's the play. Ready to start any time the Cap'n gives the word."

Elton, as his assistant departed in quest of leave orders, scanned again the accumulated secret reports of the Swiss-Austrian complication. These reports established beyond any reasonable doubt that the Hapsburgs were receptive to a separate peace with the Allies for Austria. They also established clearly that in the way of Austrian deflection stood one of the most sinister and effective spy rings with which the Allied secret service had ever attempted to deal.

Seven French agents had paid the price of their lives to date in matching wits with Herr Baron von Schlossner, German attaché at Berne, whose agents kept Vienna behind an impenetrable wall of black intrigue. Three of the French agents had got through to Vienna only to disappear into thin nothingness there. One Austrian agent had reached Berne, but only after having

been left for dead on the Swiss frontier, so seriously wounded that he died a few hours after finding his way to the French legation. And the code book he had brought along for use in negotiations was missing.

Three quick rasps of Rand's buzzer informed Elton that Colonel l'Ourcq had reported in from Paris. That suave, lean little aristocrat of the French Second Bureau had disposed of inevitable French amenities and was already pressing his case when Elton entered. L'Ourcq's eyes glinted a moment's friendly interest at seeing Elton, whose past successes against the best of the Imperial shadows had stirred the Frenchman's enthusiasm.

"Ah, my dear Captain," L'Ourcq said, "I was just saying to Monsieur le Colonel Rand that nothing it is so important as tripping this Prussian scoundrel von Schlossner. *Mon Dieu,* but is it not true that if we open the route to Vienna, soon do we rid ourselves of the armies of Austria? Does that not mean Germany must come to us on her knees, crying for peace on such terms as we wish to make?"

Colonel Rand was drawn within himself, wholly on the defensive against L'Ourcq's demands. He squirmed in his seat as he framed the words of discreet refusal to be drawn into the von Schlossner quest.

"No one more than I, *monsieur,* would like to co-operate in this Swiss-Vienna case," he said in a slow, precise voice of finality. "But as I've said, I have no authority, neither has the American commander, to operate on Swiss soil in defiance of Swiss neutrality. Surely the American organization in Switzerland, controlled from Washington, is alive to the situation. Why does not your government cable our Secretary of State?"

"The diplomatic agents in Switzerland, my Colonel," L'Ourcq rejoined with a touch of impatience, "they understand everything, yet are they able to do nothing. Our Captain Lareaux at Berne, he is the able officer, but in Switzerland his face it is known to every German spy, so that day and night they keep his movements under their eyes. Also, my Colonel, three of our best men from the Deuxieme Bureau who we send to help Lareaux incognito—they are murdered within this very week. *Voila!*"

"Do I understand you to mean, *monsieur,*" Rand challenged, "that the Swiss police are unable to deal with such outrages? Surely the French official influence in Switzerland—"

"Pardon, my Colonel. But please to remember our agents must go incognito to Switzerland, which means we can not defend them, or so much as confess their identity as French agents. And it is that von Schlossner kills with a murderous cunning and never is there evidence enough for the Swiss, even though we know whose hand is red!"

Elton knew the futility of L'Ourcq's best arguments against Rand's closed mind. He also saw the rising tension between the two, and interposed with polite firmness.

"If I may say a word, gentlemen," he proposed quietly, "perhaps I can offer a solution. I've just asked for leave to visit Nice, for Lieutenant McGee and myself. If you will approve the request, Colonel Rand, we can at least take our fling at von Schlossner."

Rand snapped erect in blank astonishment at the desperate proposal. Something close to resentment fixed itself in his eyes.

"You mean—you and McGee will go into Switzerland without official sanction?"

"There appears to be no other way, sir. France has sent her agents by that route—and assuming a government has the moral right to put men into battle to be killed, surely there could be no deep moral offense against that government if its men took their own chances where some great benefit might be

gained. In any event, I assure you, sir, that what happens to McGee and me while on leave will remain strictly our own affair if we get tripped up in Switzerland."

Rand leaned slowly back in his chair to stare at Elton through several somberly thoughtful moments. Intrepidity—a virtue the stolid colonel never had possessed, even in his younger days as a cavalry leader—always stirred him with a pang of secret envy. Nor did it fail to nettle him inwardly that this mild-mannered young officer, with his composed, almost boyish features and youthful air of ease, had piled up within the past year, often counter to Rand's prudent counsel, those unfailing successes against the Imperial secret service that were Rand's chief claim to recognition as a spy executive.

The colonel's beefy face was cast in grimness as he decided.

"I can't ask one of my officers to take chances where even his own government must repudiate him in the event of—misfortune. But if it is your own firm wish to do this, I'll offer no further objections, in view of the critical importance of the case. You understand, of course, Elton, the slender chances you will have in this game, and that I will be forced to repudiate your action in going into Switzerland if—if anything goes wrong there?"

"Perfectly, sir. I assume the full responsibility and will accept the consequences of anything that happens in Berne without embarrassment to you, sir, or to our government. Now if the Colonel will excuse me, I'll get ready to start on my—vacation."

CHAPTER II

THE OUTPOST ON LAKE GENEVA

IN the narrow corridor of the old French military caserne outside Rand's office, Elton waited until the French Deuxieme Bureau chief emerged from the Rand interview. He invited L'Ourcq to his own cubbyhole for a brief private interview on the situation in Berne.

"My felicitations, Captain," L'Ourcq said, with a warm French smile, as he accepted a chair in front of Elton's desk and lighted one of Elton's American cigarettes. "You have handle the problem of your Colonel Rand with the excellent delicacy and firmness. Ah, but it was upon you I was depending for that, my Captain, when I came personally from Paris today!"

"Thank you, *monsieur,*" Elton replied circumspectly, "but it is only fair to Colonel Rand to say that I did exactly what I think he wanted me to do. You see, he's terribly handicapped by instructions from the United States on neutral relations, particularly with the Swiss."

"You are the very loyal officer to your colonel," L'Ourcq responded with a twinkle in his gray eyes. "As for the details in Berne—Captain Lareaux, who is our accredited military attaché, will tell you everything. My bureau will wire him immediately in the enciphered code that you are coming, my Captain."

"Have you, sir, any special suggestions?"

"The mission—in a few words it is that Austria must have the voice to speak from Vienna. Perhaps it is you must go to Vienna to arrange for the secret code by which our diplomats can parley. But everything it is for your own discretion when you have confer with Captain Lareaux, who can give you the closest details, Captain."

"As I understand it, sir, von Schlossner's spies have Berne pretty thoroughly in the palm of their hands. Have the Swiss been informed in detail of this situation?"

"The waste of good breath, Captain. Three of von Schlossner's assassins Lareaux have secretly brought to arrest through Swiss friends of France. *Oui,* although it is that Lareaux knows every-

thing, yet he is able to prove nothing. So, three assassins they are released at once by the courts for want of evidence. A fourth prisoner Lareaux took the night before last and holds incognito—a secret prisoner in his billet. The one was the driver of a Swiss motor-cab in which our agent, Lieutenant Murmont, is murdered as he leave the Berner club."

"Just how was he killed, Colonel l'Ourcq? And your other casualties?"

"Each time it is the same death, my Captain. A thrust through the heart with a thin blade of the kind that is carried hidden in a walking stick. It is with the greatest secrecy we get our agents into Berne—and yet if the German ministry it is notified by wire from Paris, this von Schlossner could not learn more quickly. It is the same with the secret Austrian agents that are sent by Count Zierach from Vienna for parley with our legation."

"And you are convinced that high authority in Vienna really means business on terms for a separate peace?"

"But yes, of that there is no doubt of any kind. Yet it is that so delicate a matter must be handled with the greatest delicacy. Also, please remember that at Vienna, even in the highest circles, there are Austrians in German pay to work with von Schlossner. Therefore, if you must go to Vienna, you will find that city far more dangerous than Berne."

"Because of Swiss neutrality it will be necessary for me to slip into Switzerland by the back door, Colonel. But I'll have to depend on you for suitable passports for my masquerade once I reach Berne. Likewise I'll need a French motor car for my run to Geneva, a launch to put me up the Lake to Lausanne and an auto to run me on into Berne, if all that can be arranged."

"The excellent route, Captain, although you will find Lake Geneva very treacherous even on these dark nights when there is no moon. When is it you wish to start?"

"Within an hour or so, if that is satisfactory." He took from his desk a slip of paper and handed it to the Deuxieme Bureau chief. "You will see from this I have already made my preliminary plans. This lists the things I want help on in reaching Berne."

L'Ourcq studied the memorandum thoughtfully and looked up with a nod of approval. A glint of cold mischief sparkled in his eyes as he rose, picked up his cap and extended a farewell hand to Elton.

"*Au revoir,* Captain. If it is that a dose of his own medicine this von Schlossner take, it is not a matter to weigh upon our conscience. Also, when that scoundrel breathes no more, the route to Vienna it is not so dangerous! Lareaux will be ready to receive you at his billet. *Bon voyage!*"

Elton, as the Frenchman marched out, took up a final survey of the secret files of the case at Berne. An excellent photograph of von Schlossner, snapped by an Allied agent at Berlin a few months before, was a part of the record. Elton's interest centered upon the face that gazed out at him under a strong glass. Von Schlossner was a man of composed features; clear, level eyes that, despite their first impression of frankness, were cold and hard and complemented the cynical arrogance stamped upon the Prussian agent's thin lips.

As he studied carefully the von Schlossner face, Elton, master of the art of reading men, smiled slowly at reaching his final conclusions. Von Schlossner was of the Prussian military caste, an officer coached in the general staff's best schools of secret service. Moreover he was a man temperamentally adapted to intrigue and one whose character had been molded by the philosophy of Nietzche, the blunt reasonings of von der Goltz and the callous materialism of the Imperial staff. Such a man would

act relentlessly, without conscience, compunction or mercy; a calculating assassin in the line of duty. But his weakness would be his inordinate vanity, his absolute belief in his own infallibility.

Lieutenant McGee stalked in.

"Got the leave orders for Nice, Cap'n," he reported. "Any instructions?"

"Meet me at my billet in an hour, ready to start, McGee. Wear civilian clothes. You'll need nothing else with you but your toothbrush, comb—and service pistol. That's all!"

THE two, sped by a fast French staff car from the French military mission at headquarters, reached Besançon late at night. Midnight of the next day took them over the last rough kilometer of the Franco-Swiss frontier into the village of Evian on the French shore of Lake Geneva. A French officer in uniform loomed shadow-like from the black entrance of the *hôtel de ville* at their approach and cautiously identified himself.

The Frenchman, moodily silent, led them through the sleeping village to a thin trail that led up the lake. As he came to a stop at a point where the dim hulk of a motor boat lay close against the shore, the Frenchman listened for some moments with straining ears.

"The lake it is very restless tonight, *messieurs*," he warned, with a shrug. "Since darkness I have heard the many motors in the distance, as if the boches expect some one wish to pass from France into Switzerland."

"Probably mere precaution," Elton reassured.

The Frenchman shrugged again and led the way aboard his craft. Carefully he inspected its mechanism, spending several minutes going over a pile of what appeared to be ordinary fish netting that lay in the stern of the boat.

Lake Geneva's dark waters, rippling softly in the starlight, passed swiftly astern as the launch nosed out of the inlet and laid her course towards Lausanne on the Swiss shore. The Frenchman, evident veteran of the endless swift conflict of spy and counter-spy across the Swiss lake that controlled the secret approaches to France and Germany through neutral Switzerland, shut off his motors from time to time to listen. Twice they caught the hum of distant motors and sharply changed their course.

They had swung far out into the lake to avoid the boat routes leading into Geneva and were proceeding cautiously in mid-lake when there was a sudden burst of sound to starboard.

"*Vivedieu!*" cried the Frenchman. "The boat of the boche spies!"

The Frenchman swerved sharply into a new course and fed all its power into the heels of his craft. The other craft, which must have been lying with dead engines in wait of French prey, lost a hundred meters or more in picking up its heels. The Frenchman shook his fist into the void behind.

"*Diable*, but they will catch up with us in no time!" he shouted. "Do I not recognize those engines! *Oui*, the new boat of the boches—with the speed of the devil!"

The two launches, maneuvering without lights, settled down to the grim chase. Very shortly it became apparent to Elton and McGee, standing in the stern, that the easy superiority of speed was held by the pursuer. The Frenchman shook his fist again and swore malignantly.

A shattering musketry sang above the roar of motors. A chorus of missiles, flying wide, pinged by. The Germans adjusted their range and churned the water, but their marksmanship was ineffective in the starlight.

Elton and McGee returned the fire with their automatics, a few shots in the darkness. Both knew the small chance of registering a hit, unless by chance.

But they also judged that at any moment the two boats would draw within sight and effective hitting range. And they guessed that their pursuer held not only superiority of speed but of number and armament. The Frenchman's voice rang out above the din.

"*Monsieur!* Please that you hold my wheel! For the one moment—and hold her steady, straight ahead!"

McGee sprang forward and, as he took over the wheel, the Frenchman dived into the litter of netting in the stern, hurriedly adjusting its meshes, freighted with small black cylinders, along the gunwale. Then he leaped back to take over the wheel from McGee.

"Quick, *messieurs!*" he cried. "When I give the word—heave overboard my little nets!"

A dim shadow loomed out of the night, its reality grimly attested by vindictive spurts of flame leaping from hostile muzzles. The ping of steel hornets filled the air. Elton caught a sharp thud at the rail beside him, a simultaneous shower of splinters. His alert mind identified the Austrian anti-tank pellets, large enough to make a sieve of the French launch if the enemy targeted below the water line.

But he stood crouched in full view, tense over the French net, while McGee calculatingly poured hot lead from his automatic. The Frenchman stood with his hands clutching the wheel in a firm grip, while his gaze was fixed not upon his course, but upon the omen behind. Suddenly he turned to his wheel and spun it, the boat heeling into a sharp curve directly across the course of the pursuit.

"*Voila!*" he shouted at the top of his lungs. "Heave!"

On the instant Elton and McGee fed the littered net overboard. Elton, his faculties coolly alert, clearly observed the springing of the Frenchman's trap. A desperate maneuver, requiring cold, accurate precision and the highest order of craftsmanship. The pursuers caught the threat and attempted to escape the danger by a quick veer of direction. But the Frenchman had timed his trick with an expert care. The fangs of his trap closed down upon the German bow a moment later, the impact setting off cylinders of high explosive. A flash as of sheet lightning smote the darkness, followed by a resonant detonation. Elton caught the grim fleeting spectacle of black objects violently hurtled into space. Then darkness again and only the roar of French motors.

"*Sacre bleu!* But I will teach them there is more to this war on Lake Geneva than fast boats!" the Frenchman gloated, with the full strength of his lungs. "*Voila!*"

The first gray light of dawn was thinning the Swiss skies as the craft crept softly to a landing under the hillsides south of Ouchy. The Frenchman listened long and carefully before going

ashore for reconnaissance. He returned to the boat shortly and nosed her into a boat-house; then escorted Elton and McGee by a devious route into a near-by suburb of Lausanne. Elton saw with a smile of satisfaction that the Deuxieme Bureau's long arm had set its pegs accurately. A large Swiss motor cab, manned by a French agent in civilian clothes, was waiting.

"My orders, *messieurs,*" the French boatman announced as he saw his two fares into the motor cab, "are to wait in Lausanne until the *messieurs* return." He indicated a stone house standing near by. "I will be waiting the touch of *monsieur's* finger upon the door. *Bon voyage, messieurs.*"

"Thank you for your good wishes," Elton said with a cordial smile. "Also for your excellent boatmanship in putting us through von Schlossner's first outposts. We'll make every effort not to keep you waiting too long in Lausanne, *monsieur.*"

CHAPTER III

A CAT OF NINE LIVES

IF the von Schlossner vigil across the Franco-Swiss frontier transferred its furtive shadows from the scene of tragedy on Lake Geneva to the long, tortuous road connecting Lausanne with Berne, Elton's clandestine expedition escaped its suspicions. Swiss civil police checked the driver's papers at numerous villages but were readily satisfied. Early afternoon saw the car threading the busy streets of Berne toward the billet of Captain Lareaux, accredited French military attaché, on the Gerechtigkeitsgasse.

Captain Lareaux gasped a moment's inarticulate astonishment at recognizing Elton, then his restless black eyes searched anxiously up and down the street.

"*Le bon Dieu,* my Captain, but you travel like the wind!" he exclaimed, as he ushered his guests into the billet. "It is only the hour ago that we have receive and decode a message from Colonel l'Ourcq that tell us you have leave France—by the back door. You have no difficulty with the lake, my Captain?"

"Your man from Evian sunk a boche patrol for us, *monsieur.* But we were not bothered driving in from Lausanne."

A look of sharp anxiety swept Lareaux's thin face.

"But the eyes of von Schlossner, my Captain," he exclaimed, "they must have observed your travel from Lausanne!"

Elton smiled easy reassurance.

"In any event I got here," he reminded. "Of course, I do not expect to remain undiscovered indefinitely—which reminds me, Colonel l'Ourcq promised that you were to provide us with suitable passports."

"Yes, my Captain. I have obtain for you the excellent *carte d'identité,* attested by the consulate of Spain at Geneva. You are Señor Jon Cespides, a dealer in the hides and butterfats who comes to Switzerland from Madrid on the business. Your Lieutenant McGee must serve as Don Portez, valet and chauffeur for you, my Captain."

Lareaux placed two chairs for his guests, poured brandy and ordered luncheon. Elton observed that the French attaché, under his efforts at easy cordiality, was extremely tense and fretted. Lareaux's thin, well formed features were drawn and haggard, his gray eyes harried and his fingers opened and closed nervously.

"My arrangement with Colonel l'Ourcq," Elton said presently, "is to co-operate with you in every way possible in clearing the way for official word from Vienna, *monsieur.* We are ready to help in any way possible."

"For the moment, *messieurs,*" Lareaux said with a grave shake of his head,

"there is nothing you can do that is discreet. Until this von Schlossner is out of the way, Vienna it is impossible!"

"Then I suppose, *monsieur*," Elton replied, "that I had better put in my time making a discreet reconnaissance of the lay of the land in Berne. You'll appreciate our necessity for making every minute count?"

Lareaux again shook his head, with a deepened gravity.

"Pardon if I speak frankly, *messieurs*. But it is the unhappy circumstance that today it is you arrive in Berne."

"Sorry if we've spoiled any plans of yours, *monsieur*," Elton said quickly. "If we might prove in any way an embarrassment I trust you'll be good enough to say so."

"That must not matter now, *messieurs*. Also it is impossible that you leave my billet now, unless everything might be ruined."

"Something important in the air—affecting Baron von Schlossner?"

"Yes, my Captain." Lareaux's eyes were level points of steel. "I intend that von Schlossner—I shall kill him this afternoon!"

Elton took a thoughtful sip of brandy and smiled.

"That will simplify everything, *monsieur*—and I'm sure it will especially delight Colonel l'Ourcq."

"The death of this wolf it is the delicate operation, which perhaps a whiff of the wind or the shadow from a cloud might disturb. Therefore my fear of your arrival from Lausanne, which von Schlossner's agents must have record with their eyes. Such a thing might put the Herr Baron too closely on the *qui vive*."

A servant came in with luncheon. Since Lareaux showed no disposition to discuss further the details of his death trap for von Schlossner, Elton did not press the subject further.

"Colonel l'Ourcq," Elton said when they had eaten, "advised me you are to acquaint us with details of the von Schlossner crimes in Switzerland. I understand the baron has murdered several of your unofficial agents who came into Berne incognito to help you."

"*Diable*, but this scoundrel have the resources of a devil, my Captain. It is impossible that the Prussian staff is able to read our enciphered codes from Paris. Yet our men, they are identify the moment they cross the frontier and come to Berne. Never do one of our men finish with the reconnaissance than he is dead. Three officers, they die within the fortnight!"

"What were the circumstances?"

"Lieutenant Murmont he is last seen alive at the Bellevue-Palace where, incognito, he go to observe this von Schlossner at a diplomatic luncheon. Our lieutenants Dupré and Devore, each goes alone to the Berner Club where von Schlossner spends many evenings with his Swiss and German friends at wine and chess. Since the cabs of the French service are not discreet, our lieutenants use the commercial motor cabs of the Swiss. Devore and Dupré, they leave the Berner Club by cab—that is the last we know of them alive!"

Elton smoked a contemplative cigarette.

"Doesn't appear that these Swiss cabs are very healthy, does it?" he reflected. "Just what concrete evidence have you connecting the German attaché with the murders?"

Lareaux swore vehemently through his teeth.

"But this Prussian monster he does not leave me to make the guess, my Captain! Each time it is that a French agent dies by a thrust in the heart of a thin blade, the voice of von Schlossner come to me over my private telephone to gloat. *Diable*, but it is the torture I must not stand another day—to be stung by such arrogance!"

"You have brought these facts to the attention of the Swiss civil police?"

"*Vivedieu,* but do you not see at once, my Captain, that this is impossible! Would not the German ministry reply to such charges that they are absurdities —yes, a trick of the French to stir feeling in neutral minds? Is it reasonable to Swiss official minds to believe the accredited German attaché will commit the murders and boast of them to the French attaché? *Voila,* so it is I must take into my own hands the action—"

Captain Lareaux broke off abruptly and leaped to his feet. His eyes were set upon the door of an ante-chamber which had just opened. A very young man in Swiss artisan's smock entered, brought his heels sharply together and saluted.

A Frenchman, Elton saw, and wondered at the unfathomable mood in which the young man presented himself. The newcomer's face was taut and flushed and in his wide, black eyes there shone an indescribable fervor.

"It is the hour, my Captain Lareaux," the youth said in a low voice that was vibrant with suppressed emotion. "I am ready."

Captain Lareaux stepped quickly forward, clasped the lad's shoulders and kissed him on either cheek.

"*Mon cher* Lieutenant Fortneuf," he said in French, "I know you will not fail France in this hour. But whether or not you succeed, never can it be said that a French officer offered his life for a more valuable service!"

"I will do the best I can, my Captain," young Fortneuf said.

Fortneuf stepped smartly back two paces, brought his heels together again, saluted and left the room. Lareaux stood looking after him through several tense minutes, then turned to the sideboard to toss off two glasses of brandy, after which he pulled himself together and sat down facing Elton.

"Pardon my emotion, Captain," he said with an effort at controlling his voice, "but Lieutenant Fortneuf—whose father was the colonel of my first hussars—goes now to deal with von Schlossner. *Le bon Dieu*—and carefully as we have work out the every detail I have the unhappy premonition."

Lareaux leaned back in his chair and lit his pipe with a hand that shook visibly.

"The plan of Fortneuf," he resumed in a moment, "it is one of the simple violence, yet for many days have I plan for it. Fortneuf he have gone by a secret exit under my billet. In his workman smock he will make his way to a billet on the Framgasse where there is a German Mauser for him. Each day the Baron pass in a legation car for his billet. Young Fortneuf is the expert rifleman—so is it not reasonable that he shall hit the target of a man from the range of twenty meters?"

"The simplest plans," Elton reassured, "sometimes succeed where more complicated ones fail. Their very audacity throws the enemy off guard."

"If Lieutenant Fortneuf succeed," Lareaux said somberly, "he will find help in making his escape to the frontier. If he fail—but of such a tragedy I must not think!"

"With von Schlossner out of the way, what will be my next move, *monsieur?* You are convinced the Austrians really want a separate peace?"

"Ah, but for the break with Germany, Austria has been praying, my Captain! The people want peace, the Hapsburgs want peace. But it is that they are held in the grip of the German intrigue. Yes, with von Schlossner dead his hundred agents in Berne are so many witless geese. From Vienna can come the agents of Count Zierach, who speak the secret thoughts of the King. In a few days, if our legation can hold the secret parleys with Austria—the Kaiser he lose the Austrian armies from his front!"

"Colonel l'Ourcq told me that one Austrian envoy got through, but was so badly wounded at the frontier he died soon after reporting to Berne."

"*Oui, oui.* Herr Bolz, the agent of Colonel Count Zierach. At the frontier he is attack and left for dead. By the miracle of courage he come to Berne—and before he die we learn much, my Captain. The ring of German intrigue, it throttle Vienna. No one is it that Count Zierach dare trust with his secret. One, five, ten trusted Austrian agents die before they can leave Austria to bring a secret code to us at Berne for use of our statesmen. A thousand agents of the Imperial staff infest the Austrian capital. They have their long ears everywhere, so that even the Emperor dare not think in whispers. *Voila!* The Italian front, the Swiss frontier, Lake Constance, even the airplanes are under the eyes of these Prussian spies. Berne is even more dangerous. Although Herr Bolz give to us the means of reaching Count Zierach, yet no Allied agent can reach Vienna alive, my Captain. Always there is the—German trap!"

"But I take it, if Fortneuf wins, we will be ready to open the way to Vienna," Elton commented with a confident smile. He glanced at his wrist watch. "In the meantime, since there is nothing we dare do outside, may I see the German suspect you are holding here incognito? Colonel l'Ourcq informed me of the arrest."

"As you please, Captain. But the wretch he will not speak. Not even an hour of hanging by his thumbs loosened the fellow's thick tongue."

The French attaché led the way downstairs to a dank wine cellar. His German prisoner was a grenadier type, porcine of frame and feature. He was unshaven, unkempt and sullenly defiant. Elton attempted to question the fellow, only to be met by a stolid glinting of resentful black eyes. The type of agent, he saw, that the Imperial staff picks for assassins with great skill, in the knowledge that, properly trained, such a man will take the gallows in silence if trapped.

When he and Lareaux returned upstairs, Elton asked for a room in which to rest up from his junket. Indicating to McGee that he did not wish to be disturbed for the time being, Elton stretched himself out across Lareaux's bed to estimate developments. There loomed the possibility that shortly Baron von Schlossner might cease to exist in the flesh. Or again the arrogant Prussian spy master might loom a bigger menace than ever, all depending upon the steadiness of young Fortneuf's aim. Against either contingency he meant to be prepared. A quick dash for Vienna was mandatory to explore the Hapsburg lust for a separate peace. With von Schlossner alive, the slightest trail behind could only spell certain death at the Austrian capital.

As the afternoon wore on toward dusk, Elton could hear Lareaux's restless pacing back and forth across his library. He finally rose, well satisfied with the plans he had woven for meeting the immediate future.

"It's about time, McGee, for a report on the Fortneuf operation," he announced. "Lareaux has been walking his legs off in there. Perhaps we'd better go in and give him some moral support."

The Frenchman had worn himself down finally and was slumped in a chair, grimly contained. He got up to bow stiffly as Elton and McGee came into the library. Minutes of strained silence and stiff conversation passed. Then a buzz of his telephone carried the Frenchman to his feet with a bound. Resolutely he crossed the room, glancing nervously at his watch. He took up the receiver gingerly.

"Captain Lareaux, assistant military attaché of the French legation, speaks," he said in a low voice.

The Frenchman suddenly stiffened, the last vestige of color disappeared from his drawn face. He dropped the telephone receiver back in place and turned dazedly away.

"Poor Fortneuf," he said in a voice barely audible. "He is dead."

Lareaux took up a decanter and slowly poured a drink of sherry. A slow transformation enveloped the man. His mouth hardened into a taut line, a slow fire in his eyes mounted to a blazing fury, his fingers bit into the palm of his hands.

"*Diable,* but it was von Schlossner dared tell me this terrible news!" he cried. "Yes, *messieurs,* that was the voice of this Prussian cat of nine lives at my telephone! For the moment my blood was water—in the picture of poor Fortneuf lying dead! Fortneuf, the son of my colonel of hussars! *Vivedieu,* but there must come to me the revenge for this murder!"

CHAPTER IV

THE UNINVITED GUEST

A SECOND buzz of his telephone took Lareaux hurrying to the receiver. He stood for some time, nodding slowly as he heard a report from one who must have been his own agent. His face was cast again in dull tragedy when he hung up.

"The confirmation of the heavy news, *messieurs,*" he announced grimly. "A *sous-officier* it is who report. Poor Fortneuf he succeed in firing upon von Schlossner. But perhaps it is that the stress of excitement it is not good for the aim. Also, *messieurs,* the scoundrel's sedan it travel with great speed—and so the bullet miss its mark. So, as Fortneuf emerge into the street he is met by one of that Prussian's agents, who stab him through the heart!"

Lareaux walked back and forth across his library. A tear sparkled in his eyes and trickled down his cheek.

"The Swiss they have claim the body—and my government it dares not speak, *messieurs!*" he moaned. "So poor Fortneuf, his body must rest in the nameless grave, even though it is he die nobly in the line of duty."

"Our deepest sympathy, *monsieur,*" Elton replied. "But—*c'est la guerre*—and now we must force our minds back to the Vienna situation. I intend to start for there as quickly as possible."

"Such a plan it is impossible!" Lareaux protested. "To leave Berne for Vienna without the knowledge of von Schlossner, such a miracle can not succeed, my Captain!"

"I meant to ask you for a plane from Paris. It need only land at some convenient point near Berne long enough to pick me up."

Lareaux shook his head and spread his hands in a gesture of futility.

"There is no point in Switzerland a plane it can land without the knowledge of von Schlossner's agents, my Captain. The instruments of the boche are set up along the Swiss frontiers to detect our planes. If it flew toward Austria, von Schlossner instantly sends the warning to Vienna. Do you not see this is folly? Yes, and the anti-aircraft guns of the Austrian geese fire even upon our planes that carry the propaganda to be showered over Vienna!"

"Exactly the type of plane I must have, and with a good load of propaganda sheets to be dropped on the city. After that the plane can proceed on into Italy without landing. I will take my chances on getting in and out of Vienna."

"But, my Captain, have I not warn that this is desperation? Von Schlossner will warn his agents in Vienna. No sooner do you land than—*poof!* At the first daylight it is you will stand before the Austrian firing squad, my Captain!"

"But I do not propose to let von Schlossner guess what's up, *monsieur.* Provided he is still alive when I leave Berne, we can lead him to believe that the French plane carries nothing more dangerous than French propaganda

leaflets to stir up Austrian peasant dissatisfaction with Germany."

"My Captain, it is that you underestimate this Prussian. Do you not understand his agents have seen it that some one enter my billet. Yes, perhaps it is he observe you from Lausanne! Perhaps it is that even now he know it is you—Captain Elton, who is at my billet. So—it will be this scoundrel's orders that my visitors they must be accounted for at the every instant!"

"That's entirely possible, *monsieur*," Elton said placidly. "But I've planned against that contingency. Which reminds me it's important I make a little reconnaissance of Berne as soon as possible—and we can discuss details later."

"What is it you propose, my Captain?" Lareaux asked nervously. "Please to remember that I am the accredited French attaché—and my government it dares not openly offend Swiss neutrality."

"I'll not fall back upon you, *monsieur*, if I get in a tangle with the Swiss police. I presume von Schlossner's agents will be looking on when I leave your billet?"

"That it is most certain if you leave by the front door. But under my cellars there is the secret route to the street behind—"

"I'll go by the front door, if you don't mind. I'd appreciate it if you'd furnish me a disguise—a particularly lurid one—such as a red wig, reddish beard and dark glasses. McGee must have a Swiss cabman's cap and a smock."

Lareaux finally gave up efforts to question Elton further.

"If you insist, my Captain," he acquiesced with a shrug.

In the grotesque disguise furnished by the Frenchman, Elton spent half an hour driving about the city, noting the lay of certain streets. He smiled an inner satisfaction at glimpsing a motor cab that flitted back and forth on his trail. The plan he had worked out for dealing immediately with von Schlossner was elastic enough to meet any probable development of the night ahead. It was a plan peculiar to Elton's method of operation, one that took into calculation his foeman's temperament and possible lines of violence, and in which there was something of the method of a surgeon who devises a vaccine with which to fight a plague. And first of all he wished to focus the attention of von Schlossner upon this latest Lareaux visitor who rode about behind chauffeur and guard, in a vivid disguise of red wig and florid whiskers.

On arriving back at Lareaux's billet, Elton gave terse instructions to McGee to arrange secretly through Lareaux's man for a second cab that was to arrive on the street behind the French billet in exactly thirty minutes. The cab in which they had driven from Lausanne was to be left in the Lareaux garage.

"What's the play, Cap'n?" McGee grumbled. "Don't I get anything better to do than sit on the front seat of a cab and wonder what's up?"

"Nothing may happen, McGee, or a great deal may happen. We're playing with a fox of many holes and first of all we must locate the lay of the land. Now get moving!"

"Yes'r," McGee assented.

On re-entering the Lareaux billet, Elton stripped off his disguise, changed into dinner clothes which Lareaux provided and presented his host with two requests.

"First, I must have a guest card for the Berner Club, for dinner this evening," he told Lareaux.

"Pardon, my Captain," the Frenchman spoke up in instant protest. "But the Swiss club it is not discreet for you. At that place it is the Baron von Schlossner who hold the every advantage!"

"Nevertheless it affords me an excellent opportunity, *monsieur*, to gain contact with the enemy and sort of feel out his trail."

"But if he have the slightest suspicion

of some guest, the Baron he need only snap the fingers! And the identification card of Señor Cespides, it will hardly pass the close visé of the Swiss police, if it is the German attaché who make complaint."

"As I read von Schlossner, he'd elect to work out his own game, *monsieur*. Please remember he did not appeal to the Swiss in dealing with your French secret agents from Paris. Second, I'd like to have that German prisoner of yours slicked up, shaved and fitted with dinner clothes. I may need him tonight —and if I do it will be very urgent."

"You do not explain, my Captain!"

"Some one may have to die tonight, *monsieur*. That some one may be me, if things go wrong at the club. As a last resort, my death might prove an excellent thing, provided I am able to plan it in my own way. I do not want to appear unduly evasive or persistent—but the hour is getting late, and may I earnestly urge your co-operation?"

Lareaux accepted Elton's negations with a shrug and complied with the American's cryptic requests. Half an hour later Elton left by the secret exit under Lareaux's billet and groped his way by a devious course through the twisted black alley in rear of the French billet to the adjoining street. An excellent piece of co-ordination brought a small Swiss motor cab to the curb for him, McGee and the French agent manning the driver's seat.

"Put me off at the Berner Club," he instructed. "Then wait outside until I report out."

On entering the Swiss club, Elton saw that the first fall of the cards in tonight's precarious game favored his design. No one, so far as he had observed, followed him from behind the Lareaux billet; and the club was filled with guests in dinner clothes, which favored his own security. His guest card was ready for him at the *maitre-d'hôtel's* desk and a uniformed attendant guided him with polite deference to the dining room.

Elton, seated at a table for two, ordered dinner and glanced over the room. The faces about him were mostly German, largely of the diplomatic or military cast. His disciplined features gave no hint of the momentary tension as his eyes fell across a figure in evening clothes that unmistakably was the Herr Captain Baron von Schlossner, center of a group of six at a near-by table. For the briefest moment Elton's eyes centered upon the Prussian agent, then fell away discreetly to a further perusal of the menu card.

But in that brief moment, Elton's mind had filmed an impression as sharp and clear-cut in its details as a photograph, to be studied at his leisure. Von Schlossner, in the flesh, dining with his own kind in a secure haven, merely emphasized the story told by the Prussian's photographic record back at headquarters. An arrogant cock of inordinate vanity, quick of wit and untroubled by compunction. And Elton guessed that the von Schlossner successes against the French could only have fattened the fellow's sound belief in his own infallibility in the devious game of espionage.

From the Herr Baron's table behind him, Elton caught the note of gay humor and light badinage that prevailed there, almost to the point of hilarity. They spoke in German, mostly light patter, but with an occasional cryptic reference which Elton could not divine. He thought that their gay preoccupation over wine and dinner favored his immediate design—which was to learn as much as possible of the von Schlossner habits at the exclusive Berner Club, particularly the strength and composition of the Baron's bodyguard and his hour of departure for his billet.

Elton, waiting for his dinner to be served, was sipping a cocktail when he sensed, rather than saw, a figure pass by him from behind. A voice addressed

him in the next moment. He glanced up to find before him the flushed face and sparkling gray eyes of von Schlossner.

"Your pardon," von Schlossner said in German. "I am the Captain Baron Erich von Schlossner, assistant attaché of the German ministry at Berne. May I have the honor of a few words at your table?"

Elton rose and nodded, with a return of something of the glitter of amused mischief that shone in the von Schlossner eyes.

"This is an unexpected honor, indeed, Herr Baron," he replied, motioning his uninvited guest to a chair at the table.

"Thank you, *señor,*" von Schlossner rejoined, casting a quick glance of amusement to his friends behind. "I must leave my companions only for a moment. But I could not let pass your distinguished presence in Berne without a word of greeting. Perhaps it would interest you to know what we were just saying of you, Herr Cespides?"

"I'm certain that would be very interesting, Herr Baron. Please speak with the greatest freedom."

Von Schlossner's eyes fixed with ferret-like tenacity upon Elton as he proceeded, a bantering smile playing lightly across his thin lips.

"We were commenting, Herr Cespides, upon your truly remarkable resemblance to a certain American secret agent in whom I am keenly interested. A Captain Fox Elton, whom I have been hopefully expecting here for some time."

Elton smiled nonchalantly and tendered von Schlossner a Spanish cigarette.

"That is both interesting and amusing, Herr Baron. I hope your American friend will not disappoint you. My own resemblance to him is not too uncomplimentary to either of us, I hope."

"The resemblance is—perfect, *señor.* But, of course, it would be simple for me to distinguish Señor Cespides of Madrid from Captain Elton of the American Army. That American would be sure to slip into Switzerland by the back door, and go about with forged passports furnished him by that abominable French goose, Captain Lareaux, and wearing a disguise of red whiskers and dark goggles."

Elton observed, without outward sign, the gloating enjoyment in which von Schlossner delivered himself of this subtle challenge. He returned the gauntlet with a level smile.

"But I can't imagine why the American should wish really to avoid so interesting a person as yourself, Herr Baron. Unless, of course, he feared complications with your Swiss friends."

"That would be a very silly fear, *señor.* It is not my practice to lean upon the Swiss in meeting my—official obligations."

The Prussian agent rose very deliberately and bowed stiffly, an arrogant smirk across his mouth.

"I trust you will pardon my intrusion, *señor,*" he said with cool politeness. "But I trust that if you meet this Captain Elton you will let him know my sentiments. *Auf wiedersehen.*"

CHAPTER V

LAREAUX GREETS A SPECTER

ELTON complacently resumed his dinner. Except for a slight inner tension he was perfectly at ease. He knew that shortly he must face the crisis that von Schlossner's covert challenge had forced. He guessed that the von Schlossner warning had been merely a show for the Prussian agent's guests. But it disclosed to Elton that his antagonist was very sure of himself—of his complete mastery of the situation in Berne.

Having deliberately unmasked his intentions, when and how would the Prussian strike? With cool deliberation Elton estimated von Schlossner's probable lines of action. That the blow would fall

quickly he accepted at once. But since violence in the Berner Club, even an adroit knife-thrust or a skilfully administered cyanide, might arouse Swiss suspicion, Elton guessed that the attack would not come until he left this enemy refuge. Doubtless en route to the Lareaux billet.

Behind him as he ate, he heard merriment at von Schlossner's table. The Herr Baron's little show of pluck was a conspicuous success to his henchmen and guests. Their merriment warned Elton that the Prussian must hold ready some quick plan of action. And he argued that the cunning and thoroughness that had unmasked him at the Berner Club would leave nothing to chance in removing him from the Swiss scene.

When he had dined, Elton went to the reading room, selected a current magazine and sat down to turn its pages in a show of leisurely abstraction while he put his mind to the details of defence and counter-attack. The challenge stirred him now with the hot zest of conflict as he found himself face to face with the inevitable adventure for which he had come to Switzerland.

But he did not minimize the von Schlossner advantage of terrain. A final settlement of accounts might have to wait, even though Elton claimed for himself the advantage of having pieced together into a coherent pattern, out of the fragments of evidence, the whole scheme of Prussian mischief. Only at the proper time, now that he had been identified, did he mean to turn von Schlossner's plan directly back upon the Prussian agent.

His first necessity now was to communicate with Lareaux. Since the telephone was not to be risked, Elton went to a writing table. There he penned detailed instructions to Lareaux and McGee, wrote in Spanish several pages of a letter to Madrid, covertly slipped the instructions into his pocket, sealed the Spanish letter into an envelope which he addressed to Señora Cespides, and rang for a servant.

"Obtain the necessary postage and mail this letter for me," he instructed, giving over the letter with a five-franc note.

He returned to his magazine and waited until von Schlossner's agents had ample time to get possession of the Spanish letter. Doubtless, he reflected, the Herr Baron's agents would laugh at this seemingly witless subterfuge. He noted that von Schlossner had dismissed his guests and was occupied over a chessboard with a Teuton friend. In due time Elton strolled out of the reading room and under the stress of an apparent afterthought, hurried downstairs.

"My servants—I forgot they have not eaten," he informed the *maitre d'hôtel*. "Where can I send them at this hour, to a place not too far away, to dine?"

Receiving instructions he went outside to where McGee and the French agent were parked in waiting. He slipped the letter of instructions into McGee's hand.

"Take this by a roundabout course to Lareaux, at once!" he directed. "It's up to you to see to it that Lareaux complies to the letter. Otherwise we're both sunk! You can say to Lareaux that I accept full responsibility for everything that happens. Then get back here as quickly as possible."

"On a live trail, Cap'n?" McGee asked with hopeful eagerness.

"There's no time now for details, McGee."

"I was only thinking, sir, maybe Lareaux will insist on knowing what's up."

"You can tell him von Schlossner has recognized me—and intends to kill me when I leave the club. I am forced to oblige the Baron, McGee, but have no intention of dying personally if I can avoid it. Now get going!"

McGee's brows knotted over Elton's cryptic evasion as he set the car in mo-

tion. Elton returned to the reading lounge and resumed his magazine with an air of supine unconcern. Von Schlossner, he saw, continued over the chessboard. And he guessed that there was more than cold show in the Baron's concentration, a genuine interest in his struggle of kings and pawns. Which was eloquent testimony of the Prussian agent's complete confidence in that other little game he played as he waited only for the gory dénouement of a

"Any trouble with Lareaux?" Elton inquired anxiously as McGee, carrying out his role of flunkey, opened the cab door.

"A lot of argument, Cap'n. But I brought along my man. There's a black smock and a Swiss cap for you on the front seat—and this Frenchman knows the spot where he's going to jump for it."

"Did you keep the play at Lareaux's under close cover?"

henchman's final thrust through Elton's heart.

Half an hour later a servant came in with word for Señor Cespides that his servants had returned from dinner and were waiting at the curb below.

"Thank you," said Elton in a voice meant to reach von Schlossner's ear. "Inform my chauffeur and servant I'll be down at once."

Von Schlossner gave no slightest indication of having heard. His head was bent intently over his chess as Elton passed, got overcoat and hat and sauntered outside.

"Yes'r. Somebody was following, but we drove into Lareaux's garage and closed the door before loading that German in."

"Good work, McGee. Now get going and drive fast!"

As he stepped into the cab, Elton solemnly inspected the stolid lay figure that sat strapped erect on the seat beside him. Under the dim glow from street lights he caught with a shudder the grim details of white shirt front, florid beard and dark goggles.

On swirling around the second corner from the Berner club, the car careened

close to the curb and slackened its pace momentarily. The French agent leaped lightly to the ground and darted away in the darkness and at the same moment Elton, his evening clothes covered by a black smock, climbed through to the vacated seat beside McGee. The car leaped forward again.

"Got your automatic handy, McGee?" Elton inquired.

"On the seat here, Cap'n. Safety released and ready to go. But what's the big play? It'd help if I knew what's up—especially if we're going into a tight pinch."

"I'm expecting this cab to be stopped at any time. Probably by some one claiming to be Swiss civil police. Accept without question and sit tight. Pay no attention to what goes on behind. Remember we're playing a ticklish game. If anything slips, I'll give the word to fight. But I expect that'll not happen. That's all, McGee."

McGee settled himself moodily to his driving. The dark secrecy in which Elton sometimes kept him in this game of fox and hounds with the Imperial secret service never failed to put McGee in the sulks. A thinking part in the game, with all the cards face upward, was more to his liking, so that he could feel himself a part of the quest, and not a pawn. But no matter what his humor, McGee held the faculty of implicit obedience to orders, whether he liked those orders or not. And there always came the later solace of Elton's insistence that without McGee's resourceful execution of details success must have been impossible.

The cab rattled on dizzily through darkened streets toward the Lareaux billet. Elton was in the throes of misgivings when a large Swiss motor cab dashed out of a side street immediately behind them and raced alongside, forcing them to the curb. On the running board stood a dark figure who commanded them to halt.

As the two cabs came to a stop, three figures bustled out of the large cab.

"By authority of the Swiss civil police!" one of them barked. "Our orders are to inspect the papers of all persons traveling by motor cab tonight. See to it that you cause us no delay or inconvenience!"

A dark figure threw open the door of the Lareaux cab. There sounded a heavy roar of motors—the full force of their power fed into idling motors. Amid that uproar Elton caught, an instant later, a grim sound, as of a stifled cry of agony. The door behind slammed shut, a voice shouted an order to drive off. The three assassins leaped into their vehicle and dashed away.

"Drive on to the Lareaux billet," Elton instructed in a low glum voice. "Take your time to it. We'll not be bothered any further in Berne tonight."

Some little time elapsed before there was a response to the bell at Lareaux's billet. When the door opened, the French attaché himself appeared. He stepped back aghast at sight of Elton.

"*Le bon Dieu,* Captain Elton!" he exclaimed, blinking incredulously, and reaching out to touch Elton's arm as if to reassure himself that his senses played him no trick. "But—it is you, and in the excellent health!"

"Never felt better in my life, *monsieur,*" Elton said, quickly closing the door.

"But—this it is the amazing surprise, my Captain!" Lareaux exclaimed. "Even when the bell it ring from the touch of your finger at my door, I am at the telephone listening to the words of this scoundrel von Schlossner! Yes, he say you are dead, Captain Elton, and that your body it will come to my billet at once!"

"A slight miscalculation on the Herr Baron's part, *monsieur.* But may I impose upon you to have your servants help Lieutenant McGee with the body of von Schlossner's victim, which must be discreetly disposed of. This time the

Baron murdered one of his own assassins, the prisoner you lent me. I regretted the necessity but had no alternative."

Lareaux's puzzled eyes suddenly lit with understanding.

"Ah, I perceive, my Captain. The grand coup! It is the sweet justice that von Schlossner's thin blade dispose of the murderer of poor Devore! Also it is to the mind of this Prussian that you no longer exist."

"Exactly, *monsieur*. An excellent time for a French plane to pick me up as soon as possible. One of your propaganda planes that can account for its presence over Vienna by dropping several thousand sheets of printed matter on the city."

"But—our best pilot who know Vienna perfectly—he would not dare make the landing at Vienna, my Captain! German instruments would identify the plane from the hour it crossed the Swiss frontier and follow its flight with the greatest accuracy."

"I'll take a chance on landing from a parachute, *monsieur*, and get out of Vienna the best way I can. But it's important now that I get into the Austrian capital as quickly as possible for a little interview—with Count Zierach."

CHAPTER VI

COUNT ZIERACH'S SENIOR AIDE-DE-CAMP

THE large French two-seater that dropped out of the moonlit Swiss skies to a deft landing by light of flares ten miles out of Berne shortly after dark of the day following paused only long enough for the pilot to read a terse note from Captain Lareaux and take aboard a passenger.

"*Bien*, Captain!" the French pilot shouted. "The sheets of paper you will drop into Vienna when I give the word. When it is I give the second word, you will make the landing. *Bon voyage*, my Captain!"

The plane swept into the air again, climbing high as the pilot set his course for Vienna. The presence of that plane over Switzerland was known some time before by von Schlossner, Elton surmised. The Prussian might even locate the point of secret landing. German airplane detectors would follow the French course to Vienna. But the plane's junket later would be accounted for by the cargo of propaganda dumped into Vienna. And thereafter the craft would swerve away to the Italian lines for landing and fuel before returning to Paris over safe terrain.

Von Schlossner could be counted upon to check carefully during the next few hours. Every known Allied agent and official would have to be accounted for. But suspicion would not center at the Lareaux billet. Elton had slunk deftly away the night before and made his way afoot, without escort or guide, to the point of rendezvous with the pilot from Paris. McGee and the French agent from Lausanne were still in evidence at the Lareaux billet. Elton no longer existed in the von Schlossner mind.

Elton did not minimize the desperate game he must play in Vienna. The Hapsburg court would be securely hemmed in by German agents. Such a man as Count Zierach, confidential adviser to the Emperor of Austria, would be under constantly alert German eyes. German desperation would see to it that her dubious and wavering ally harbored no secret Allied emissaries, developed no underground line of communication with Berne that might lead the Hapsburgs to a separate peace designed to save what was left of the Austrian wreck.

Elton knew that his masquerade, plausible as it might appear, was a thin one for invasion of the Franzensplatz. The uniform he wore was that of an Austrian hussar lieutenant. The man whose credentials he carried, Lieutenant Otho Kufzig, died in a French prison camp some weeks before. Lareaux, in

arranging this masquerade, had been openly skeptical. But Elton knew that at least he would not face the handicap of a direct warning from Berne that would set the whole Imperial wolf pack at Vienna on the scent for Captain Elton, American agent.

Less than an hour remained before daylight when the French plane dropped plummet-like from the high altitude at which it had been sailing. Elton caught a dense black smudge below which he knew must be Vienna. Presently small bursts of flame below signaled the ominous bark of the anti-aircraft dogs.

At a signal from the pilot, Elton released the bundles of propaganda sheets which went flurrying behind like snow to fall on the roofs and streets of the Austrian stronghold. The plane, traveling at high speed, dropped lower, the pilot defying the anti-aircraft bombardment for the evident purpose of taking his precise bearings. Then the Frenchman swept higher, following a zigzag course. The fire from below was shortly left in the background. A second and third time the plane dropped for bearings—then came the Frenchman's signal for Elton's landing.

He pulled himself together, climbed coolly out of his seat and, taking a deep breath, dropped deliberately feet foremost into the dark void below. By the time his fall was broken by opening of the 'chute, the French plane was lost in the distance. Long fingers of light from the Austrian searchlights were playing across the heavens. But their rays were shot high, from which Elton guessed that the Austrian observers had caught the fluttering sheafs of white and held no suspicion of a secret parachute visitor.

From the length of time he was drifting softly downward, Elton judged that the Frenchman had put him overboard from an altitude of several thousand meters. He knew that at best his pilot could have selected nothing more definite than a general vicinity for landing, one well outside of Vienna. But he closed his mind against the whims of chance that might land him in the Danube, or the heart of an enemy bivouac. That was a part of the risk, and perhaps the smallest part, he argued.

A massive shadow that appeared to be rushing up to meet him warned him of impact with earth. A moment later he struck with a force that buckled his legs under him and momentarily stunned him. He regained his feet and released himself from the parachute. In the distance he heard dogs barking. But there were no lights to be seen nor other signs of life, from which he guessed he must be well outside Vienna.

Waiting for the first thinning light of dawn, he folded the parachute into a compact bundle and hid it in a briar thicket. In the foreground he made out the hills of the Wiener Wald and in the distance a bluish smudge that must be the Austrian capital. A few hundred yards distant lay a small farm village, at which he learned that he was at the suburb of Grinzing, immediately north of Vienna.

A convenient *einspanner*, drawn by a dilapidated nag that had escaped Austrian cavalry and artillery service, landed him at the edge of Vienna for ten kroner. His Austrian lieutenant's uniform served as an unquestioned passport outside Vienna. But he knew that this masquerade would not long stand the test of Prussian and Austrian vigilance in Vienna, and his plan was shaped accordingly.

Leaving the *einspanner* for a red trolley car he proceeded into the heart of the city and engaged a taxi. Changing cabs from time to time to mask his purpose, he spent several hours riding about the heart of Vienna, studying the lay of vital points and streets—the Schottenring, Steubenring, Franzensplatz, the Rathaus, Reichrat and Kriegsministerium.

By ten o'clock the sidewalks were crowded to the curbing with people, hundreds of them officers in Austrian or German uniforms, many of them escorting women. Elton noted that German officers predominated on the promenades. A great many more officers than might be expected to receive leave in gay Vienna during a critical period of fighting on the Western front. Doubtless part of the army of special agents, operating in the Austrian capital under the guise of absence on leave from the German ranks. An army, working with demi-mondaine, courtiers, Austrian traitors, court favorites, to spread a listening net of delicate antennae for the most cautiously whispered rumors of Hapsburg defection from the German cause.

Elton smiled whimsically as his alert eyes caught the unmistakable shadow in his wake, a small inconspicuous cab that had picked up his trail shortly after he left one taximeter for another. It warned him how small a chance he would stand of escaping inquisition in Vienna if he had adopted any ordinary plan of biding his chance at an interview with Colonel Count Zierach.

"Drive me at once to No. 11, Schottenring," he directed the chauffeur.

He stepped out of the cab at the headquarters of Vienna police with the easy assurance of a man on sound terrain and entered the station, glancing back from inside the door to note that the suspicions of his shadow had been satisfied by this maneuver. Then he presented himself to an *unter-offizier*.

"I have a telephone message to deliver in which discretion must be used," he explained in a voice of quiet authority. "I will require the confidential use of one of your telephones."

"Certainly, Herr lieutenant," assented the *unter-offizier*.

"Please get for me on your telephone the Kommandanture-Gebauld!"

"To whom does the Herr Lieutenant wish to speak?"

Elton hesitated thoughtfully and with easy deliberation lighted a cigarette.

"On second thought, perhaps I'd better talk with the Kriegsministerium," he said. "Get for me on the telephone the aide-de-camp of the Herr Oberst Count Zierach."

"Yes, Herr Lieutenant."

There followed several minutes of activity on the part of the *unter-offizier*. Elton, outwardly collected, waited breathlessly. His greatest misfortune in the present moment was some mischance that might have taken the Emperor's counselor temporarily out of Vienna. Waiting in Vienna for more than a few hours, even within the daring sanctuary of the headquarters of police, would be too reckless a gamble. The Austrian turned to him presently with a polite nod, handed him the receiver and withdrew.

"This is Oberleutnant Haugwitz, aide-de-camp to the Herr Oberst Count Zierach," a voice announced brusquely.

"I have a confidential and rather urgent message for the Herr Colonel," Elton said with level authority. "I prefer not to speak through an intermediary."

"But the Herr Colonel is occupied by an important conference in his chamber and must not be disturbed at present. Who is it speaks?"

"An officer of hussars, at the headquarters of police. Will you deliver a message in writing?"

"If it appears important enough. What is it?"

"Please write as I speak: Oberleutnant Otho Kufzig wishes an early conference with the Herr Colonel on a subject of considerable official interest."

"The nature of that business, Herr Oberleutnant!"

"The Herr Colonel, you can say to him, doubtless will understand from the name I have presented. I will wait word at the headquarters of police."

"Very well, I will deliver your message presently."

As the aide hung up the receiver, Elton sat back and finished smoking his cigarette. Shortly the *unter-offizier* reentered.

"I must wait word from the war-ministry," Elton announced. "I trust it will not inconvenience you if I wait here."

"Of course not, Herr Lieutenant," the Austrian said deferentially.

Elton waited complacently, closing his mind to disturbing fears and apprehensions. Having committed his plan to action he knew there was nothing he could do but wait the turn of events. Count Zierach shortly would receive the note from his aide-de-camp. In such an hour of intrigue and indirection the missive would receive prompt attention. Zierach would be puzzled by the name of Otho Kufzig, and would consult his records promptly. There he would learn that Kufzig was held a prisoner in Switzerland—which would quicken his interest in this Austrian fugitive who must have been permitted by the French to escape into Austria—for an important purpose.

By no method less audacious had Elton seen the slightest chance of reaching the Zierach ears and surviving in Vienna. Of this he had convinced himself before leaving the Lareaux billet at Berne. Experience had taught him that at times brash direction is more effective than cunning subtlety, the headquarters of police a safer rendezvous than the most discreetly arranged secret billet.

Less than fifteen minutes had elapsed when an officer in an artillery captain's uniform strode in and asked for Oberleutnant Kufzig.

"I am Captain Kutso, special aide-de-camp to His Excellency, Colonel Count Zierach," the Austrian announced stiffly, addressing Elton without formality of greeting. He dismissed with a bark the *unter-offizier* who had escorted him in. "I am directed to learn what business it is you have in Vienna. First I will inspect your orders."

Elton's level eyes returned in measure the insolence of the other's direct gaze. Something in the fellow's face and manner put him on his guard. Instantly he reckoned that there had been insufficient time for the Herr Colonel to check the Kufzig record and send a discreet emissary to interview the mysterious visitor from Switzerland.

"If my orders satisfy the police—and the Herr Colonel, they need be no concern of yours, Herr Captain," Elton rejoined tartly. "The authority I represent will not relish my discourteous treatment by an *aide-de-camp* who has not been officially identified to me."

"You need not be impertinent to a superior officer, Herr Oberleutnant," Kutso retorted with somewhat less assurance. "However, it is my duty to learn what business you have with His Excellency."

"I have an official report to make to Colonel Count Zierach that my orders do not permit me to present to any one else, Herr Captain. Therefore I am waiting here for His Excellency's instructions."

"So, very good, Herr Oberleutnant!" Kutso exclaimed with a sudden enthusiastic approval in his voice. "In that event you may come at once with me to His Excellency's chamber at the Kriegsministerium."

CHAPTER VII

TWO MEN IN A CELL

CAPTAIN KUTSO indicated the door with a stiff bow. Elton weighed the situation swiftly. After all his visitor must be some one in the Zierach confidence. Otherwise, if this man served the Imperial secret service, he would hold no need for subterfuge in taking a suspect

from the headquarters of Austrian police.

An Austrian staff car was waiting in the Schottenring. The two rode to the war-office on the Steubenring without conversation, Elton covertly studying his escort and the suspicion that the other had aroused at first sight. Kutso was Austrian, of the better caste, a staff-type of military martinet, with clear-cut, almost effeminate features stamped in an expression of unrelenting arrogance. The fellow's eyes were a light gray, cold and shifty, the eyes of a born intriguer.

But little as he trusted Kutso, Elton pinned his faith in the discretion of Count Zierach, and in the desperate interest Zierach must hold in clandestine word from Switzerland, in clutching at any discreet straw that might mark the way of a secret exchange with Allied diplomats toward a separate Austrian way out of the Teuton wreck. It was this dependence, based upon the Zierach act in sending the ill-fated Bolz to Berne with the intercepted code book, that had forged Elton's decision for the brash jump to Vienna in thin masquerade.

The staff car stopped in front of an imposing stone building on the Steubenring. Upon the massive front of the building Elton read the significant inscription *Kriegsministerium*. Kutso strode ahead, tossing a careless salute to the sentries at the door, and up a broad winding stairs to an ante-chamber on the second floor. An Austrian *oberleutnant* rose and cracked his heels.

"I have an interesting visitor who must consult His Excellency in person," Kutso announced.

"His Excellency is giving dictation to a secretary," the *oberleutnant* replied.

"Then I will take the responsibility of entering," Kutso snapped and with a curt nod of his head indicated Elton was to follow.

Seated at an immense oak table in the center of a large chamber was an elderly man engrossed over a mass of papers while dictating notes to a *feldwebbel*. The man was in late middle age, thick-set, with a square, massive face, and wore the undress uniform of a colonel of horse. Elton identified him instantly as the man he had come to Vienna to interview, Colonel Count Zierach, confidential *aide-de-camp* to the Emperor of Austria.

There was a brief gleam of annoyance in Zierach's large, bulbous gray eyes at the interruption.

"What is it, Kutso?" he asked sharply.

"I have brought this Kufzig who telephoned a while ago to Oberleutnant Haugwitz, Excellency," Kutso reported.

Zierach turned to a young officer seated near his elbow. His face was now a placid mask behind which no emotion or interest showed.

"Did I not instruct you, Haugwitz, to have the fellow investigated without taking up my time with the matter?" he inquired with patient politeness.

Haugwitz bit his lip and glared at Kutso.

"The Captain has taken this upon himself, Excellency," he replied quickly. "When I received the call by telephone, I made no mention of it to him."

"But I overheard what was said, Excellency," Kutso spoke up, "and thought it my duty to bring the man here for question. If I have overstepped in what I thought my duty, I humbly apologize."

"No matter," said Zierach. He glanced at Elton. "What is it you want to say to me?"

"It is a matter, Herr Colonel," Elton said quietly, "that I am able to discuss with you only in the greatest confidence."

"An unusual request," said Zierach, staring at Elton through several brief moments in which Elton sensed, rather than saw, some strong emotion behind the mask of Count Zierach's face. "Very well, I will dismiss my secretary from the room."

As the *feldwebbel* withdrew, Zierach indicated a chair for Kutso.

"From my *aides-de-camp,* I have no secrets," he said bluntly to Elton. "You may proceed with your report, Herr Oberleutnant."

Elton stood silent. The development was not to his liking. Kutso's overzealous conduct had fanned his suspicion of that officer. Doubtless Count Zierach must not yet have checked the record of the ill-starred Kufzig, sensed the hint of possible Allied intrigue in a secret emissary from a French prison camp.

"Is the Herr Colonel familiar with my past record?" Elton shortly inquired, searching for a way out of discussion in Kutso's presence.

"You were last reported a prisoner in the hands of the French," Zierach replied. "I would assure that you have escaped, but prefer that you speak for yourself. Please remember my time must not be wasted."

"What I have to say, Herr Colonel, has to do with the death of an Austrian agent, Herr Bolz, who died recently at Berne," Elton said in a final desperate effort at eliminating Kutso from the room. "That being the case may I not have a few moments alone with you to deliver my report?"

There was no change in Zierach's stolidly patient face except a slight hardening of his broad, thick mouth.

"I have said there are no secrets from my *aides-de-camp.* If you do not wish to speak, I shall be compelled to turn this entire matter over to Captain Kutso, in whom I have implicit confidence, for his attention and report."

"Very good, Herr Colonel. The code book that Herr Bolz carried to Berne failed of its destination for reasons that the Herr Colonel must understand."

"Yes, I understand perfectly!" Zierach spoke up with sudden emphasis. "Our agents in Switzerland prevented that black treachery. But what is the word you have for me, Herr Oberleutnant? You are rapidly exhausting my patience!" He turned sharply to Kutso. "Has this man some business of me, Herr Captain, or is this a case of mental illness that you have imposed upon my patience?"

"Your patience for a few moments, Excellency," said Kutso. "From the telephone at the headquarters of police I have had transferred this man's fingerprints to be compared with the record of Oberleutnant Kufzig. It may even be that we have another Allied agent—one foolish enough to invade the Kriegsministerium."

Elton managed a smile of unconcerned confidence. But he knew that the Teuton secret service net was closing upon him. Even if the fingerprints at the headquarters of police failed, Kutso now could extend the record in a few minutes and strip his masquerade. And Zierach's whole attitude was the final omen. Was he the victim, then, of some hideous misinterpretation of the Zierach attitude toward a separate peace? Elton saw that his masquerade had been all but stripped off, that blunt direction offered him his one desperate hope.

"I will come to business, Herr Colonel," he announced coolly. "I came to Vienna from Berne to arrange with you a means of communicating with Allied statesmen upon the subject of a separate peace for Austria. If I have made a mistake—"

"*Donnerwetter!*" Zierach exploded, his face ashen. "An Allied spy dares insult me by his presence in the Kriegsministerium. You, Kutso, and you, Haugwitz, have heard this fellow's confession. Or is it that he is mad! Arrest him at once!"

Elton merely bowed.

"Evidently a slight miscalculation on my part, Herr Colonel," he said quietly.

Zierach's placidity was gone. He rose to pace the floor while Kutso and Haugwitz searched Elton for weapons and relieved him of the Kufzig credentials.

Halting suddenly he issued explicit orders.

"You, Haugwitz, escort this spy to the guardhouse, through the passage from the Outer-Burg-Platz. See that he is placed in a cell incomunicado under a special Austrian guard that you will select yourself. You, Kutso, will go along to the cell with this wretch and get from him what he has to say. Likewise, Kutso, you will stand guard over him until the order of execution comes, which will be in short order. Not a word of this, either of you, to anyone! I will not tolerate the—embarrassment. You, Haugwitz, will report back to me when my orders have been executed!"

Between the two *aides-de-camp* of Colonel Count Zierach, Elton was taken down to the staff car. An order from Haugwitz set the car off through the crowded streets to the Outer-Burg-Platz. An Austrian battalion, band playing and colors fluttering in the wind, was mounting guard, observed by a vast throng of women and children, when the three reached the guard buildings.

"First, we must report our prisoner to the commandant," Kutso averred, "together with a brief statement of the charges."

"Those were not our orders, Herr Captain," Haugwitz objected. "It is necessary only to report that this prisoner is held by orders of Colonel Count Zierach. I am to select the special guard, and you are to question the prisoner and be responsible that he does not escape."

"That is correct, Haugwitz, although I must say you are very technical. If you ever used discretion of your own you might have had the credit of capturing this spy."

"When he came to the Kriegsministerium, I might have attended to that, Herr Captain."

"Or by your stupidity, permitted His Excellency to be murdered," Kutso sneered.

An Austrian *unter-offizier* selected a small cell, one furnished with a metal cot. The single window was barred and grilled, and a grille of heavy steel closed the hole behind a stout oaken door. Into this place Elton was thrust by Kutso, who entered behind him, demanding that a chair be brought in for his own use.

"The cot is not fit for me to sit upon," he announced with a lift of his nose. "Three French spies used that before their last sunrise and I can not be sure it is not infested with French vermin. Now I must trouble you to answer my questions promptly. Who sent you to Vienna and precisely what were your instructions?"

Elton lit a cigarette and smiled cold amusement.

"I trust, Herr Captain, you don't expect me to tell you everything I know. But it does appear that I made something of a mistake, wouldn't you say?"

"I will tolerate no insolence!" Kutso snapped back. "The wise thing for you to do is answer my questions promptly and without reservation."

"The matter of your toleration wouldn't seem to matter much, Kutso, in view of the order of execution your man Zierach is sending over," Elton retorted whimsically. "I presume that I will be freed of a great many worries and responsibilities when the sun comes up on Vienna in the morning. Well—one can not always win at games of high stakes."

Kutso's gray eyes lit with a sly sparkle as he changed his tactics.

"But I can imagine circumstances under which there need be no order of execution," he baited. "If what you tell me is of enough value, I might strike a little bargain with you, my man. An Austrian prison camp is not such an unpleasant place."

"Somehow I couldn't rouse much faith in your word, Kutso. Besides there's nothing I could tell you that your superiors would be willing to trade on."

"Please hold a civil tongue—and remember I am to be the judge of what you say. Since you did not come from Berne, tell me where you did come from and who sent you."

"I came from Berne—more or less what we call absent without leave. But nevertheless in the line of duty."

"It is impossible that you came from Berne or we should have had a warning from the Herr Baron von Schlossner, who knows everything that happens in Switzerland!"

"I'm afraid your friend Von Schlossner will get quite a jolt to his vanity when you send him my photograph and fingerprints. I presume, of course, he will deny having ever heard of me—but by that time, Herr Captain, a great many things no longer will be my concern."

"Let us get to business, my man! I know well enough that you are the tool of that infernal clique of Austrians who want to betray Germany! *Ja*, a list of their names and the details of what they are about—it will save your neck for you! Come, if you will tell me, I will even arrange for you to have special quarters, food and privileges in our best prison camp."

"In the first place, Kutso, you're on a cold trail. In the second place, I'd not tell you what I knew, even if I knew it to tell you."

"*Himmel*, but I will loosen your tongue!" Kusto roared, scarlet with rage. "An hour or two hanging by your heels from a ceiling may change your mind, you swine!"

The Austrian sprang to his feet and bellowed for the guard. When there was no immediate response he began pounding on the iron grille with the back of his chair. Shortly the outer door of oak crept slightly ajar and an Austrian grenadier timidly asked what was wanted.

"Do you dare keep me waiting!" Kutso barked at the soldier. "Open this door on the instant!"

The soldier slowly shook his head.

"I have my orders, Herr Captain. I am not permitted to open the door."

"Swine, you dare defy a captain's orders!" Kutso roared. "Do you understand the penalty of delaying my official duty!"

Again the soldier, livid under Kutso's threats, shook his flaxen head.

"I have my orders, Herr Captain," he muttered and shut the door.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAWS OF COUNT ZIERACH'S TRAP

KUTSO stood facing the barred door in tense silence. As if unwilling to accept the evidence of his own senses he tried the heavy grille. When he turned away his eyes were roving furtively. Elton caught the play of the Austrian's mind, in which a sudden fear had thrust itself. Finally he must have reassured himself, for he nodded and cleared his face of its fretted scowl.

"That fool will be whipped for his impudence!" he muttered.

Elton's mind was busy, searching through that scene in Zierach's office. A ray of hope shone through the blackness, but this he did not grip too avidly. This scene of the oaken door slammed in Kutso's face might mean a great deal. Or again it might have been nothing more than a blind obedience to the Zierach order that Kutso stand personal guard over the prisoner.

"If you intend to confess, I will give you this last chance," Kutso bit out, throwing his shoulders erect. Elton noted something in the fellow's voice that suggested a man who puts on a bold front to reassure himself. "The order of execution bearing His Excellency's signature will not be long delayed in reaching here!"

"But perhaps, Herr Captain," Elton retorted pointedly, "you begin to suspect you have been poking your nose into dangerous business, eh?"

Kutso started violently, then flared beet-red.

"Silence, swine!" he blurted. "I'm in no humor to tolerate your boorish tongue!"

"Neither am I, Kutso. Please bear in mind I'd have nothing to lose if I gave you a sound drubbing."

"You must not suppose I am here unarmed," Kutso rejoined, suggestively tapping his pocket.

The threat, however, settled Kutso's tongue. He moved his chair to the farthest corner of the cell and smoked one cigarette after another while shifting about nervously in his seat. Elton sat on the edge of the cot, a wary eye on the Austrian. An hour passed. Kutso got up and paced anxiously back and forth, close against the wall opposite Elton. The fellow was racked by a growing uncertainty. Again he rattled at the door and in an outburst of violent expletives shouted for the guard, the officer of the day, the commandant, and Haugwitz.

Another hour passed. Kutso ran out of cigarettes. Elton offered him one but the Austrian rejected it with an oath. Elton noted that the noon hour had gone by. No one brought food. As the afternoon wore on without word from outside, Kutso alternately paced the floor, heaped impotent maledictions upon the stupidity of Haugwitz and sat nervously twisting at his fingers.

Elton's courage rose. The passing of fretful minutes added new fuel to his hopes. Had his calculations not been too far afield after all? Was distrust of an *aide-de-camp* behind Zierach's violent response to an Allied agent's visit? But if so, how was the complication of Kutso's suspicions to be surmounted, how the tangle of his own arrest to be unraveled without uncovering a danger-

ous Austrian intrigue against the German cause?

Evening was approaching when the oaken door opened slightly. In the opening Elton saw framed the face of Haugwitz. Kutso sprang to the door, cursing the junior *aide-de-camp* with his first breath and demanding that the steel grille be opened forthwith. Haugwitz shook his head.

"I am following my orders, Herr Captain," he said. "I have here an official order to be delivered only to the prisoner. You will stand aside while I do so."

"First it will be delivered to me!" Kutso demanded.

"You are only delaying matters," Haugwitz replied with patient firmness. "You should know by this time that I always execute my instructions to the letter.

"*Himmelcreuz!*" Kutso swore. "Have your own stupid way, but I warn you that you'll pay for the indignities I have suffered here, Haugwitz!"

At Haugwitz's beckoning Elton stepped to the grille. Zierach's junior aide thrust quickly through a small aperture a large manila envelope, unsealed and bulging with its contents. The oak door slammed shut. Elton caught the typewritten warning on the flap of the unsealed envelope—

CAUTION

He crossed to his own side of the cell and looked inside. There was a typewritten note of instructions, in German; brief, cryptic but unmistakable. Underneath, covered by folds of blank paper was a thin, keen pointed knife.

"I warned you," Kutso sneered, "that the order of execution would not be too long delayed. A court martial is not necessary when His Excellency signs the order. But that fool Haugwitz must not think I will wait here until the hour of sunrise!"

Elton looked up with level eyes and nodded grimly.

"Yes, the order of execution, Kutso, if I'm not mistaken."

He dropped the envelope on the cot and quickly strode across the cell. Kutso backed close to the wall and reached frantically for his weapon against this unexpected attack. Elton seized the Austrian's wrists and disarmed him.

"Kutso, you and I are going to exchange uniforms," Elton said with quiet firmness. "I have the advantage of weapons, now, but since a pistol is noisy, and I have no taste for cutlery, I'm giving you this chance to yield sensibly."

"*Teuffelhund!*" Kutso raged and launched frenzied fingers at Elton's throat.

Elton struck, a blow that carried the staggering violence of co-ordinated sinew and torso. The Austrian reeled against the stone wall, staggered groggily and launched a dazed second assault. Elton timed a second blow, a third. Kutso's knees sagged and, as he slipped to the floor, Elton lifted him to the cot. He silenced his captive with a gag from the Haugwitz envelope, covered Kutso's face with a large black silk handkerchief from the same source, and proceeded with the exchange of uniform. This done, he bound Zierach's senior *aide-de-camp* securely to the cot and covered the form with a blanket.

Another hour passed in silence. Kutso abandoned his useless struggles against thongs and gag and lay without motion. Elton sat in the chair, waiting with restrained impatience. There could be no doubt of a summons from Count Zierach. And there might remain for Elton only the problem of his return to Berne, bearer of code book and secret instructions that would open the way for a separate peace with Austria.

The faint tinkle of chimes vibrated through the thick walls with the hour of nine. The oak door opened again, a

wooden-faced Austrian grenadier appeared. He opened the steel grille.

"Oberleutnant Haugwitz respectfully requests that the Herr Captain come outside to his car," the grenadier said, saluting.

Elton, in Kutso's uniform, wearing even the Kutso monocle, saw the convulsive but futile struggle on the cot as he left the cell. Kutso had heard the summons even if helpless to answer it. The way out was by a rear exit, dimly lighted. The grenadier pointed in the direction of a waiting staff car, snapped his heavy heels together, saluted, and turned back. In the staff car sat Oberleutnant Haugwitz.

"You wear Captain Kutso's uniform so well and managed to march so nearly as he does, that for a moment I was startled in the fear that Kutso had worked a miracle," Haugwitz said as the staff car moved off. "Kutso is dead?"

"No, Herr Oberleutnant. I merely tied him up and gagged him."

"It was necessary to wait until night," Haugwitz said, lightly dismissing the subject of Kutso, "and also to check many details to learn if we might proceed with caution. You are Captain Elton, of the American Military Intelligence."

"Your information is excellent, Herr Oberleutnant."

"It is very fortunately so, for all of us, Captain, because it can not now be reported from Berne that you were in Vienna. We have, in the records, the report of Baron von Schlossner that Captain Elton is dead."

"The Baron has really been very helpful, hasn't he? But what about Kutso, when he gets his release?"

Haugwitz snapped his fingers.

"Kutso has spoken his last word, Captain Elton. For some time we have suspected that Kutso was in the hire of the Germans. Does not such a traitor to his master deserve what he gets? Men of my own selection, who are loyal Austrian soldiers, will march Kutso out at sunrise without looking under the black handkerchief that covers his face. His death will serve the further good purpose of accounting for a prisoner sent by His Excellency into the Outer-Burg-Platz."

"I am to have the honor of a conference with Colonel Count, then?"

"That will not be possible. For reasons of discretion, his Excellency entertains German officers at his hunting lodge on the Danube tonight. But I have brought a system of enciphered code which you are to deliver to those who sent you to Vienna."

"Getting out of Austria, Herr Oberleutnant, may not be easy if there are any suspicions left behind."

"There are no suspicions—and I have for you a trusted pilot who will land you behind the Italian lines, where he must permit himself to be taken a prisoner with his plane. It is necessary that the Italians report the plane shot down, in their communiqué."

"Excellent, Herr Oberleutnant. You are fulfilling my highest expectations in coming to Vienna. What other messages am I to carry?"

"From Madrid in a few days will come a message for your highest statesmen. The code you carry will unlock it to them. We must proceed with the utmost indirection and discretion. But with the means of secret interchange between our countries, Count Zierach trusts the way to an understanding for peace cannot be long delayed. Austria asks only consideration for the Imperial household, the integrity of our government and exactions of territory that are not too unreasonable."

"All that, of course, is for the diplomats and statesmen, Herr Oberleutnant. But my own presence in Vienna must be evidence enough of an Allied wish to open up a channel of official communications."

The staff car quickened its speed as it

left Vienna behind. An hour's ride through dark suburbs brought them to a stop on an isolated road threading broad, naked fields. Haugwitz got out and guided Elton afoot across several kilometers of stubble and level barren waste. The black outlines of an Austrian bomber loomed up suddenly in the dim starlight. Haugwitz spoke to the pilot, who commenced warming up for a take-off.

"This, Captain Elton, is more priceless than a mountain of diamonds—if it serves the good purpose for which it is devised," Haugwitz said fervently, handing Elton a small, leather-backed book. "Please that you place the code in the proper hands as quickly as it is possible. I wish you a safe journey."

CHAPTER IX

THE HERR BARON MEETS A GHOST

THE sharp vibration of a signal buzzer awakened Captain Lareaux from a restless sleep. He leaped from his bed at recognizing the sound as coming from the door of his secret passage under the billet, which meant a visitor of importance.

"*Sacrebleu,* but your face it is the welcome one!" he exclaimed at snapping on the lights after admitting the shadow at his door. Lareaux looked Elton's garb over with undisguised astonishment. "You leave the officer of Austrian hussars!" he exclaimed. "You return the lieutenant of Italian infantry!"

"Landed in Italy from Vienna," Elton explained. "After I'd convinced the Italian command I was an Allied agent, they dug up an Italian uniform for the trip up to Berne, and fitted me out with excellent credentials as an Italian attaché."

"Then you have succeed in Vienna, my Captain!" Lareaux cried, in a gust of eager expectation.

"I was very fortunate, *monsieur.* Count Zierach was good enough to furnish me a complete system of enciphered code with which discreet conversations can be carried on with Vienna, through a Madrid agency!"

Lareaux, who was leading the way upstairs to his billet, halted in his steps in a speechless excitement. Then he seized Elton's hand and wrung it before he found his voice.

"The service incomparable, my Captain! Yes, the miracle! For you there is no praise that is enough!"

"How's McGee?" Elton asked.

"The Lieutenant McGee he is asleep in my billet. I have not permit, for his own safety, that he go about the streets of Berne."

"I'll bet he's as cheerful as a caged grizzly bear. Come on, I want to get him up. I am hopeful of getting back as far as Evian tonight."

"But, my Captain, there are many questions to ask of your visit to Vienna. Also, the way out of Berne it is very dangerous. Perhaps it is we can find some excellent and safer means for your return to France."

"Thank you, *monsieur.* But I have the Austrian code book ready for delivery to you and since it is only ten o'clock I have plenty of time to slip out of Berne—provided I can have your help."

"*Certainement,* my Captain. My entire resources, it is at your disposal."

"I'd like to have the use of your agent from Lausanne and a large fast staff car. But before we make any other move I'd like to learn if our little friend Von Schlossner is at the Berner club."

"At this hour, Captain, the scoundrel doubtless plays chess and drinks champagne. But the eyes of his agents, they are everywhere in Berne."

"I have had plenty of time, *monsieur,* on the way up from Italy to lay my plans for leaving Berne. And I am certain that if von Schlossner's agents saw

me leave the train, they did not contrive to follow me to your billet. Therefore I continue no longer to exist."

Lareaux went to his telephone to take soundings at the Swiss club while Elton roused McGee and gave him detailed instructions for leaving the Lareaux billet and slipping out of the Swiss capital. Lareaux shortly reported von Schlossner engrossed over chess at the Berner club. Elton delivered the Austrian code, briefly reported events in Vienna and rehearsed with the Lareaux agent instructions for his movements.

"Again, my Captain, *bon voyage,*" Lareaux said at parting. "Please that you say to my Colonel l'Ourcq that the new plan I will devise for dealing with this von Schlossner. Yes, not even news of our victory is it complete unless first I have had the revenge upon that scoundrel for poor Fortneuf!"

"Thank you, *monsieur,*" Elton replied, and added cryptically: "It is possible Colonel l'Ourcq may have some good news for you on that subject by late tomorrow. *Au revoir.*"

Elton, McGee and the French agent from Lausanne left the billet through its secret exit, eeled their way to the rear street and separated under a coordinated plan that would bring them together at midnight. McGee's immediate mission was to get possession of a Swiss commercial cab at some obscure point and by paying any price demanded by its driver. Lareaux's man was to secure a large automobile that was held under cover in another part of Berne by the Deuxieme Bureau. Elton put in his time at cautious reconnaissance.

Shortly before midnight, Elton hailed a cab on Gerechtigkeitsgasse, one driven by a bearded man in smock and conventional Swiss cap.

"Everything set, Cap'n," McGee reported *sotto voce* as Elton climbed in the tonneau beside him. "Had to pay eight hundred Swiss francs for this old boat—and the fellow that sold it to me didn't even own it."

"The owners can have it back free in the morning by applying to the Swiss police," Elton replied. "That Frenchman has everything set, McGee?"

"Yes'r. Everything lined up according to plan, Cap'n."

At a point some two blocks from the Berner club, the French agent pulled up to the curb, lighted his pipe and got out on the sidewalk to stretch himself. To all appearances he was an ordinary cabman waiting for fares in a district where such cabmen were frequent at any hour. From the tonneau of the cab Elton and McGee covertly watched the entrance of the Berner club.

From time to time, in the long wait that followed, Elton observed through French field glasses the exit of some guest. He was certain von Schlossner would indulge his chess and wine at leisure, unless he had been called away on some business. This Elton judged unlikely in view of Lareaux's report that no French or other Allied agents were reporting into Switzerland at present. Thus, at the moment, von Schlossner's agents had a right to think themselves in supreme control of the Berne sector.

Chimes tolled the hour of one o'clock. A passerby in evening clothes eyed the cab suspiciously, and passed a second time. One of von Schlossner's observers, Elton guessed. His anxiety lest too long a stay might finally bring investigation of the cab, or an insistent passenger who would unmask the operation, was reaching the point where he was debating the wisdom of withdrawal to the Lareaux billet when the French lenses disclosed, in a swaggering figure that emerged from the club, the prey for which Elton was waiting.

Von Schlossner's car, by scrupulous timing, dashed up as the Herr Baron reached the curb. On the driver's seat Elton saw two sturdy figures. One leaped to the sidewalk, touched his hand to his

cap and opened the door for his master. The German staff car dashed away through Berne and into the district of residences. From a discreet distance Elton followed until reaching the point for action, then signaled the Frenchman at the wheel. Elton's cab, in a fast burst of speed, dashed up, all but locking wheels with von Schlossner's conveyance and forcing it to a stop at the curb.

McGee and the French agent were in the street instantly, pistols covering the von Schlossner henchman. Elton quickly dashed open von Schlossner's door.

"What blundering fool are you?" Von Schlossner barked as Elton's flashlight played across his wine-flushed face. The Prussian's hand went toward his pistol. I'll have you—"

Steely fingers at the neck of his topcoat cut off the spymaster's outburst. The Herr Baron was jerked to the pavement and disarmed; his sputtered tirade of protest and malevolence throttled by a second violence that cast him headlong into the panting cab alongside. There sounded the crack of a pistol, the hissing of air from a bullet-punctured tire, then the motorcab jolted forward as the Baron's assailants swung aboard.

"This is a blunder for which you shall pay a sorry price, my man!" von Schlossner roared.

Elton thrust him sharply back in the cushions and searched him carefully for other weapons. There came a scattering of pistol shots from behind as the Baron's henchmen sounded the alarm. As the cab rounded a corner on two shrieking wheels, von Schlossner pulled himself together and asserted his official authority.

"I protest at this outrage!" he stormed. "If you are the Swiss police, or if you are Allied swine, I warn you that I am the accredited military attaché of the German legation!"

The voice that replied was level and undisturbed.

"You seem to have a penchant for introducing yourself to your enemies, von Schlossner. Do you forget so soon having presented yourself at my table at dinner a few short evenings ago?"

Von Schlossner stiffened and sat tensely silent for some moments under the goad of that voice, the voice of the man whose murder in a Swiss taxicab he had celebrated in champagne. Elton, to leave no uncertainty, lighted a cigarette, allowing the flare to illumine his face for the Herr Baron's benefit.

"So, it is really you, Elton?" von Schlossner said, suddenly in possession of his faculties. "A surprise, I must say, since there was a report about the Berner Club that you were killed by robbers on the evening you refer to."

"An exaggeration, wouldn't you say, von Schlossner?"

"But may I inquire why I am being treated in this violent and uncouth manner on the streets of a neutral city? Likewise, what are your intentions towards my person."

"You may be sure, von Schlossner, that at least I do not intend to kill you."

"A comforting concession, Elton. But you must be mad to attempt such a thing as this on Swiss soil. My men saw what happened and will promptly notify the Swiss police. Even if you should dispose of me, such an outrage against an accredited attaché will be traced promptly to your government—with embarrassments that must be apparent to you."

"Please don't forget, von Schlossner, that nothing can be traced to my government through me—in view of your obliging report that I no longer exist in the flesh."

"That is only outrageous presumption on your part, Captain Elton!"

"Save your voice, von Schlossner. I've all the trump cards of this little game in my own hands now. Frankly, I'm taking you to Lausanne, from which place we'll cross Lake Geneva under

cover and proceed on to Paris. There I'm turning you over to Colonel l'Ourcq, who can be counted upon to entertain you while I go on to Nice for what is left of a little leave of absence from official duties."

The cab shrieked to a stop in a dark street. The four abandoned the Swiss cab for a large sedan that was standing at the curbing. Taking up a rew route in an opposite direction, the large car threaded its way out of Berne and by a circuitous maneuver headed into the route for Lausanne. Von Schlossner was grimly silent until Berne faded in the distance.

"I congratulate you, Captain Elton," he said at last with cool indifference, "upon the excellent means of revenge you have worked out for yourself—provided you are successful."

"Not altogether revenge, von Schlossner," Elton replied, "although I must confess a French firing squad will make short work of you, which is altogether their affair and yours. My particular interest in wanting you out of Switzerland is that, after having opened up communications with Vienna, I want them kept open while our separate peace with Austria is worked out by the diplomats."

THE END

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TRING LUN'S TRAP

By Captain Frederick Moore

"PEARLS," Allkirk was saying—and the word slipped from his lips as honey drips from a bowl in summer—"Pearls are not to be sneezed at."

Then a distant crocodile bellowed as if stricken by a shaft shot from the mangrove's blackness. Allkirk gave no sign that he had heard the sound. Pearl Bank Bay was home to him, and crocodiles barking nothing new when night fell. As owner of the gambling concession at Tring Lun's trading station, Allkirk thought only of money.

But young Captain Liscum of the *Beacon Hill* sensed danger, felt it surge up at the back of his neck. He had anchored in the bay less than an hour before, expecting danger. And in the silken voice of Allkirk danger was showing the first red thread of its fabric.

"No," agreed Liscum, in the darkness under the schooner's awning, "pearls are not to be sneezed at—not good ones—and plenty of 'em."

Under the edge of the laced awning the red moon rose. The upper bole of a tall palm tree stood athwart the moon's disk, its mop head magnified into a small, black cloud. How queer that danger should show in the seductive

word that meant treasure in the islands —Pearls.

"Plenty," said Allkirk. He leaned forward to the wheel box and took the bottle Liscum had provided. Allkirk drank and coughed gently. "I don't mean that there are more than normal, Cap'n. But it's a new-found bank, and the percentage runs high. Silver-lip shell—the most valuable, of course. But you can keep all the pearls you find. Naturally, your divers will expect a bite on the take."

Liscum did not reply. Sprawled at ease, with every nerve really taut, he knew he'd have nothing to do with pearls. Old Sam Masury, owner of the trading fleet, had sent the *Beacon Hill* to Pearl Bank Island for bigger game than pearls. Masury had warned Liscum in Sydney that Tring Lun plotted mischief—and Allkirk's silken voice was the voice of Tring Lun.

The Chinese trader was reputed to be the head of a Chinese secret society operating in that island group that stretched five hundred miles down into an empty ocean. For many years old Sam Masury had outthought and outtraded Tring Lun and his league. That the Chinese were bent on his ruin, he knew.

And young Liscum came to Pearl Shell Island to snare Tring Lun; to snare him into showing his yellow claws.

Moonlight, white and blinding, was on the breathing water of the port—liquid silver in a glittering crater under high enclosing hills. All about the *Beacon Hill* was that brilliance, yet under the quarterdeck awning was a blackness heavy as velvet. At the edge, moonlight of the amazing solidity known only to the tropics, moonlight that dusted everything it touched with its tricky glimmer.

Captain Liscum was not a jumpy man. Tropical sun had not bitten deep to his nerves. A New Englander, from Marblehead, he was, and the fishing fleets of the Grand Banks. Winters below Fundy had frozen somewhat his bones and this hot moonlight had not melted deeply into him. But he smelled danger now, and caught menace in Allkirk's voice.

"Then you think Sands and I could make money?" asked Liscum. Tommy Sands, the boyish mate, was below in the dark main cabin, close under the skylight, listening. It was Sands who had first heard of pearls from Allkirk when ashore at the bamboo "Flag and Anchor" hotel on the beach. Mellish's hotel. And Mellish, the cockney, Liscum suspected, was hand-in-glove with Tring Lun.

"In a year you'd own your own schooner, Cap'n—and that's a lot more than you'd have if you kept on working for old Masury."

Liscum's hair lifted behind his ears. Not that he was afraid. He was on the track of what he wanted.

Barely perceptible, the hot breeze brought from the swamp the odor of crocodile nests.

Allkirk was a thin little man. Liscum saw his head, thrust forward in eagerness now, outlined sharply against the heaving lift of moonlit ebb tide beyond the *Beacon Hill's* stern. There was nobody visible beneath the cameo-like head. The gambler seem to belong in that tricky moonlight—smooth glimmer, alluring, with sharks below it, crocodiles in near-by stinking swamp, and on the other side of the bay, Tring Lun's trading station. Trapping station was what Sam Masury called it as Liscum sailed from Sydney.

"Tring knows where this pearl-oyster bank is, hey, Allkirk?"

"Sure he knows! But he's kept his yellow mouth shut. I'm letting you and Sands in on something that no other white man outside myself knows. I'm in business with Tring, as you might say—and he's left it to me to pick the white men who'll operate for us."

"I'd need capital to run a lugger and hire a crew, and feed 'em, and keep things going until I hit a good pearl or two, and I haven't any."

"Yes, you'd need capital. But you've got it, Cap'n."

"I just told you I haven't."

"A man that Tring Lun, and myself, trusts has the capital. I'll attend to that if you quit Masury—you and that kid mate of yours—and throw in with us on this pearling business."

"I'd be working for Tring Lun, wouldn't I?"

"Oh, yes, of course, you'd be working for a Chink." The words were not willing assent, but a silky sneer. Allkirk put a barb into the sentence. "But if a Chink makes you rich, you won't have much kick coming. I'd as soon work for a Chink as a codfish-eater like old Masury. You'll have thin ribs if you stick to that old nickel nurser."

"You're right there. But who'll put up the stake?"

"I will—in the open. You don't need to force my hand too hard, Cap'n. I've just told you, or admitted, that you'll be working for Tring. It's a delicate business and you don't need to go around shooting off your mouth too loud, especially in Pearl Bank or any of the other islands in the group. There'll be enough to guess—but Tring don't want to appear in it just like he'd walk down the street in a white hat."

Allkirk was getting nettled. Liscum was too shrewd. It was a bigger game than appeared on the surface.

THERE was a secret about the Chinese traders of the Easterly islands, and Allkirk knew that secret. A Chinese family is a vast clan. And Tring's family had been trading for something like thirty centuries.

When one of the clan failed as a trader, he was backed by the others in piracy. The family motto seemed to be, "Learn to sell—or learn to take." Sometimes they lost their heads at the taking game, but a head that could not sell at a profit might as well be rolling.

"I'd be back here in about three months," said Liscum. "Sands with me. I couldn't jump the ship cold here and now."

"Then you two'll come ashore tonight and talk it over with Tring? Nobody needs to know what's going on. But that three months delay'll cost you a nice fat penny, to put it that way."

Liscum considered. Allkirk held silence.

"I suppose," said Liscum, "that if I sent a radio message by Empers, Masury could send a man or two. Plenty of skippers on the beach in Sydney."

A match flared in Allkirk's hand, yellow and explosive. The gambler's thin face showed in the light, his head strangely magnified, as he sucked the flame into the end of a bulbous cigar. The match went out and Allkirk was again only an outline. His white coat showed for an instant like a thunder cloud seen in a flash of lightning which made no sound.

"You don't need to be in a hurry about a message. Talk it over with Tring." Allkirk's voice was pokerish.

"Tomorrow."

"Why not tonight? Chinks are afraid of white men who take too much time. Tring could put Japs on the job. They'd jump at a chance to keep all the pearls and give Tring the shell. Get him tonight. What in hell do you two get but wages? Masury's an old man. He'll kick the bucket any day. And if trade went bad, he'd beach you two like he would a shot of rotten chain out of the forepeak. Tring don't want to make Masury mad. He buys Masury's goods. Talk it over, that's all's wanted—and talk tonight."

"Good enough. I'll be ashore in a couple of hours. Want to have a gab

about the business with Sands—when he wakes up."

Voices broke from the shore on the hotel side. Then the silver sea was lanced by a long, thin shape that shot from the boat beach like a black meteor—a black meteor that left a shimmering yellow tail of phosphorescent water astern.

"That's Mellish coming out for me," said Allkirk. He rose.

The moon was high now above the mop heads of the palms on the point. The reef hooked like a sickle and curved back, then going under water and extending out to the channel like a fang. It lay well astern of the *Beacon Hill*, and the swamp ran down into the bight of land. The surf outside growled in a low monotone.

To starboard was the approaching canoe, paddles flashing, as natives drove it. Beyond, ashore, yellow lights like holes in a black curtain of high, jungled hill, were lamps at the "Flag and Anchor" and at Tring's sheds.

One of the lamps disappeared at Tring's place. Then another disappeared. They were shut off for a few instants, then burned balefully bright again. Allkirk leaned forward, suddenly alert.

Once more the young skipper sensed danger. He felt certain that Tring was talking to Allkirk with the lamps. Allkirk was being warned that he should leave the *Beacon Hill*. Something had happened that changed the plans of Tring. Allkirk's native canoe had left him aboard and he expected to go ashore with Liscum and Sands for the talk about pearls.

"Have another drink before you go?"

"No, thanks."

" 'Ullo, Beacon 'Ill!" Mellish, the cockney hotel-keeper, called from the canoe. "Empers got a message for you—from Masury!"

Allkirk sucked in his breath sharply. Liscum knew why Tring had signaled. Tring probably had heard the radio message over the telephone from the radio station, four miles away. And whatever it was that Masury radioed, must have put a new turn to the set-up Tring had in mind for the *Beacon Hill*.

"All right, fetch it aboard," called Liscum.

"I didn't fetch it. Empers, 'e wants you on the 'phone to read it 'sself. Private like."

A message read over the telephone, Liscum knew, would hardly be private with Tring's ear glued to his own party telephone at the trade shed. Nothing got through that was not filtered through Tring's brain.

"You can go ashore with Mellish and me."

"No. I'll have a talk with Tommy Sands first. The message can wait. And I'll want to get it before I talk with Tring. It may be orders to pull out of here in the morning. I rather expect Masury'll be coming along with a load himself to sell Tring. I'm loaded mostly with turkey red cloth."

Allkirk turned. There was a slow laziness of unconcern in his utterance as he asked, "How much trade cloth?"

"Something like fifty thousand dollars' worth." Liscum felt sure that Tring already knew the answer to Allkirk's question. Chinese spies in Sydney would have the value of the *Beacon Hill's* cargo. What Tring would not know was that the manifests were fraudulent. There was not enough value on what was in the holds to run five hundred dollars. And Liscum's orders were to lose vessel and cargo, if by the loss Tring's hand could be uncovered.

With no insurance—which Tring's spies would also report by coded radio messages—there would be no underwriters investigating the loss of the *Beacon Hill*.

But the insurance companies were eager to uncover how vessels were lost and cargoes, supposedly sunk with them, turned up in distant markets. Such

goods had been found even in China.

The old *Beacon Hill* was bait for the trap Tring had set—and it was plain to Liscum that the trap was about to be sprung.

"See you ashore," said Allkirk. The canoe shot in alongside and Allkirk boarded it. He spoke quietly to Mellish. As the canoe moved away to the scraping of paddles along the gunwales, the gambler and the cockney whispered.

Boats with torches blazing over them were coming into the bay. They made a gay parade, with the dark banners, smoke from the torches overhead. The odor of nut-oil burning sweetened the air that drifted in from seaward with them. Natives from far down the outside beaches were coming in to fish.

LISCUM was tempted not to go ashore. There might well be no message. A knife in the back, and then a Chinese coming aboard to catch Sands unaware for the same business, would net Tring, as he supposed, fifty thousand dollars' worth of trade goods to be smuggled away from the islands. If the *Beacon Hill* burned—and it would be logical to destroy the vessel to cover the fact that she had been looted first, one of Masury's vessels had been burned at sea. The skipper was never seen, and the native crew was picked up by Chinese junks.

The crew had gone ashore when the anchor was down. Only the serang, Ali, and a Manilaman were aboard. The less people aboard, the more Tring would be tempted to reveal his game. That was why Allkirk came with his fortune in pearls to get the two white men out of the vessel at the same time.

"So that shark's clear of us, Skipper!" It was the voice of Tommy Sands in the companionhood.

"Hear his line of guff?"

"His tongue's got grease on it!"

"Wonder if he knows Tring intends to finish us off when he gets us ashore? That baby's out for bear—and we're the meat."

"Hell, no! You don't think he aims to kill us?"

Liscum followed down the companion into main cabin. The music of a fiddle, scraped up in the hills in a native village, drifted through the portholes of the schooner. She shook gently to the vibration of the taut anchor chain holding against the out-running tide.

Sands lit the lamp on the bulkhead over the chart table. His boyish face was grim, anger behind his flushed cheeks. The cabin was hot. His face and neck were beaded with sweat.

The wick blazed and destroyed the moonbeams that had cut the blackness below. Liscum lit his pipe and stared at the lamp. His hard-bitten face showed a set jaw and there was a grimness in the wrinkles about his blue eyes. He took off his cap and swung it to clear the inner lining of sweat.

"Pearls!" said Liscum, disgustedly. "Tring must think we're a pair of fools." He sat on the transom and stared at his feet.

"So Mellish has a message from the owner, hey? Believe it?"

"Likely. Empers don't intend to let Tring hear it, whatever it is. Empers has been warned not to let that Chink get so much information about Masury vessels. That'll make Tring cautious—or maybe too bold for his health tonight."

"What in hell can they do?"

"We can't think Chink, Tommy. All we can do is beat 'em when they come at us."

Liscum drew an automatic pistol from his side coat pocket, looked at the weapon, returned it to the pocket. He drew from the table drawer another gun and dropped it into the left pocket.

"You're going ashore."

"I am."

Sands rubbed his damp hair down over

his forehead. He was wearing a gold ring with a jade stone and there was a flicker of yellow and green from his hand. His gray eyes were serious.

"Look sharp for Mellish. He's got a hand in this business."

"They're all in together to put Masury out of business. Big Chink money behind Tring. They want to run their own vessels with their own men and their own goods."

"The old man can't be licked by a passel o' Chinks, Skipper."

"Yes, he can. The Chinks have all the time in the clock, but the calendar will beat Masury. Chinks don't hurry when they want something done."

"Damn Chinks!"

"Don't. Madder you get at 'em, quicker they get you." Liscum rose.

"Want me to take you ashore in the dinghy?"

"No. That'd be playing into their hands. You stay aboard, and with a pair of rifles up under the awning. Till the moon's down over the high hills and these fish spearers aren't around, nothing'll happen."

"You'll take the serang?"

"I'll take the serang and make sure that Ali and the Manilaman come straight back for the beach. Then I'll hail for 'em to come for me, so I can't be cut off by having my boat's crew scuppered."

"Tring's Chinks wouldn't dare—not right in front of the hotel."

"But if he had some natives primed up to start a row, who'd know it was any of Tring's doing? But I'm not worrying until midnight, but even this moonlight's dangerous, and I'm wondering if they'll fool me."

Sands chuckled. "Not a man from Marblehead!"

"Marblehead—and keg neck, mebbe. Allkirk expects us, being from New England, to jump at a dollar so hard that we land on our noses in the ditch."

Liscum laid out a pair of repeating rifles for Sands.

"Looks like you expected me to have some gravy to stir while you're gone."

"Expect anything, Tommy. Any talking you do with anybody overside, talk with rifles, or your automatics. I might be chased on my way back in the dinghy, and you'd need to do a little Thanksgiving turkey-shooting in this moonlight. That damned moonlight's got teeth in it. Keep your ears tucked in while I'm away. Don't come for me—my job's to fight my way back to you. I'll only be at Mellish's a few minutes, and they won't beef me there. They know damned well I'd splatter the place all up with lead."

"I got kind of a feeling, skipper, you wouldn't eat breakfast alone in hell."

Liscum grinned at the lamp, pulled his cap down, and moved toward the companionway. "I'd need Tring with me to fry my eggs." He went up under the awning.

The fiddle in the hills was still going. It made a low and plaintive melody, like the flute tune of a snake-charmer—a tune to lull fears and entice, to give danger a spice and coat it over with the deceptive gloss of music in moonlight.

A great arc of bobbing torches in the fishing boats lay between the schooner and the swamp, with an occasional gay voice, and the excitement of fish brought aboard at intervals. A few boats came out from Mellish's beach. Torches were not yet lit in those boats. They headed for a position beyond where the *Beacon Hill's* anchor was down in the coral gardens, and she had out a lot of chain.

The little Serang started up the ladder. His turbaned head was a crimson blob in the moonlight. A frail little man with pipe-stem legs, he bossed the crew of big Malays with the shrill and shrewish voice of a complaining old woman. Under that turban was the mysterious power of leadership that made a dozen

powerful men jump in obedience, yet he was only a handful of bones. He had one god—Tuan Cap'n.

"You come shore-side with me, serang, and boss boat back ship-side."

The serang backed down the ladder into the bows. Then Liscum, in the stern sheets, drew away from the schooner, and headed for shore.

The tide set the schooner's anchor chain taut and straight. It rose from the water far ahead and went to the hawse like a heavy rod, while the vessel squirmed gently to the run of water along her bilges.

THE dinghy grated on the shingle. Liscum leaped ashore, and the boat left at once. The skipper waited until it was clear away, the oars spidering her over the silvered water. Then he walked up through the palms, puffed his pipe and kept his eyes roving over the deep shadows along the way.

The voice of Mellish, in jocund mood, floated out from his veranda.

"An' 'e says to me, wot you wants is tinned salmon. A forchun in it. And I says to 'im, the bloody bay's full o' fish. You Americans is always thinkin' up somethin' to put in tins and sell to nytives. W'y the blinkin' 'ell don't you fetch me chocolate bong-bongs with rum in 'em, like I et to Seattle, California, once, and was on a bender for a week, missin' my ship out. I could get the nytives drunk on rum bong-bongs and they'd—"

The telephone in Mellish's office began to ring, and Mellish let it ring without attention. Liscum could hear the insistent ringing repeated in Tring's trade shed down the beach. Then the bell stopped at Tring's.

"There you are, Cap'n," called Mellish. "Your h'orders from the h'old man, as per wot I told you. Rydio stytion. Go 'elp yourself, and a ruddy lot of luck to you from 'is 'ighness, Sammy Masury."

"Hello, Empers! This is Liscum. Got something for me?"

Empers sounded faint, a sure sign that Tring had his receiver down. "Yes, Cap'n. Orders from Masury. You'd better wait till morning and let me send a runner over. My boys won't go down the beach at night along the jungle—it's full of evil spirits."

"Important, hey, orders?"

"Important—and private. Things a bit leaky, if you get what I mean. Nothing you could do tonight, anyhow, on what I've got."

"Well, you're the doctor, Empers."

"Don't want to run your business, but if you want my opinion, you'd better—"

The voice of Empers broke off abruptly. There was a twang like a snapped banjo string.

"Hello, Empers! Can you hear me?"

"Hey, Empers! Can't you hear?"

"Wot's wrong?" demanded Mellish.

"I don't know. Sounds like the wire broke."

"'Im and 'is crimson monkeys!"

"What monkeys?"

"Empers! 'E keeps monkeys in a tree. When 'e talks, they wake up and tykes their h'exercise on the blinkin' wire. So you're done, Skipper. Might as well 'ave a drink."

"There's no great hurry about it," said Liscum, turning away from the wall telephone.

"Didn't 'e say it was important?" asked Mellish. "Wot 'e told me. And I goes for a boatride to tell you, and now it can wait."

"I'm obliged to you," said Liscum. "But we didn't know the monkeys would break the wire."

Mellish stuck to his seat on the veranda, feet up on the railing. There was insolence in him, but he did not go too far with it. And behind that sly insolence, Liscum felt that there was knowledge of

what the night held for the *Beacon Hill*.

"I could send one of my Chinks," said Mellish. "That is, if you'd really want to be gettin' the message."

"That's a good idea," said Mellish. And Liscum knew the snapped wire was to get control of the message. "The skipper could send an order to Empers."

Liscum felt a wave of anger through him. These two men believed him a fool. He returned to the porch, and stood looking out on the bay. "I've a mind to walk it myself, a night like this."

"So you could, skipper! It's only a matter of four mile—and a good 'ard beach most o' the way."

"Not a full four miles," Allkirk chimed in, backing up Mellish's enthusiasm.

Liscum would be out beyond one of the headlands, on a lonely beach, away from the bay. The jungle's rim only a few feet away in places. Sometimes wild men in the hills raided lonely beaches. A white man missing could be blamed on natives.

"I wouldn't have to come back till morning," said Liscum.

"Right you are. And it's early yet. No trip at all—and after you bein' at sea, a walk'd be a chynge."

Allkirk struggled up from the low canvas chair. He yawned and stretched his arms over his head. "I'll be drifting down to Tring's," said the gambler, carelessly. He turned and gave Mellish a look, then went down the steps and swung along the path to the trade sheds. Tring was to have news of the twist of fortune which would put the schooner's master on that lonely outside beach. There were details to be arranged.

Liscum sank into Allkirk's chair. "I'll have a drink before I start, if you'll fetch it." He tossed a coin to a near-by bamboo table and leaned back so Mellish could not see the pistols sagging the coat pockets.

Mellish hurried into the bar. He returned with gin and bitters.

"I ought to go back aboard for a gun, if I'm to go down that beach, Mellish."

"Oh, you won't be needin' no gun. Not with that moon. And as you s'y, sir, you won't be a-comin' back 'fore morning'." Mellish was getting respectful—a death watch talking to a condemned man. But the cockney did not linger while Liscum took a sparing drink. There was something to be said to the cook at the back of the building.

Before Mellish returned, Liscum was away. He walked briskly along the gravel path which led to the boat beach where the native canoes were pulled out of the water. Back from the shingle there were *attap* shelters for big outriggers. A dozen or more of these big boats were there, many without masts or the outrigger frames. Coconut bole rollers extended to the beach for launching these big boats.

Into the blackness of the palm grove Liscum hurried. He passed the first boat shelters, moved in among them, losing himself from the view of any watcher. The path through the jungle that came out on the beach was dark.

Liscum backed up against a boat under a shelter. The low leeboard provided a seat. But he knew he could be seen by anybody watching from the jungle, his outline clear against the brightness of the bay.

He climbed into the boat. The big outriggers had no sterns or stems, depending on the trim of the sail without tacking. Liscum went to the end nearest the beach, and moving some rolls of matting, made a seat for himself on the bottom of the narrow boat. His head was just clear of the leeboard enough so he could see in either direction.

FOR half an hour Liscum watched and listened. Fireflies were swooping among the palms, lighting matches on the black shadows. The torches bobbed

out on the bay over the fishing boats. The *Beacon Hill* was magnified by moon shadow, and her spars scraped the stars with barely perceptible swings.

Shadows moved jungleward. There did not seem to be enough breeze aloft to shake the mops of the palms. Mosquitoes sang to him, and he drew matting over him. He had a feeling that men were back toward the jungle.

Three figures loomed up within twenty feet of him. They were at the other end of the boat before he saw them, and they moved swiftly.

And Allkirk's silky voice, smoothed down now to a thinner shade for the business in hand, spoke with assurance.

"But he won't be back until morning," said Allkirk.

Then Mellish, in a hoarse whisper, answered. "I ain't fooled none. 'E'll be dead."

"Aw!" scoffed Allkirk, turning to look behind him. "That's all you think of—murder."

"I knows that 'ellion."

"You've got Tring wrong—he don't want to kill the skipper."

"That's your say. But for skipper bein' fair out of sight, I'd stopped 'im. Couldn't see 'ide nor 'air of 'im down beach. When 'e walks, 'e walks, and no crimson mistyke. 'Ow the 'ell 'e got so far so quick, beats me." Mellish leaned up against the boat and spat into the sand.

"I tell you it'll be all done by the time Liscum gets back come daylight. The stuff'll be in the warehouse in the swamp, and Liscum none the wiser on what happened. You can keep your trap shut, even if you don't want to help."

"I'll 'ave nothink to do with it," insisted Mellish. "Chinks ain't my puddin'. Tring'll cut your throat like you'd gut a fish when 'e's finished off things like 'e wants 'ereabouts. Nice as plum pie, now—and a lot o' talk about us makin' a forchun. No blinkin' fear! It's us that'll git 'ung."

"You're getting particular as hell, Mellish."

"I don't go to 'elp no Chinks kill white men. If that's particular, particular, yus. It's agin nature. I'm tellin' you, you'll finish off with a slit gullet."

"I can mind my own gullet." Allkirk picked up an object that he had been carrying, and put it into the outrigger. It clinked. Liscum knew that it was a heavy can.

"You go a'ead with your petrol," said Mellish. "I knows the gyme. There's three o' crew and Sands aboard. Tring's Chinks can't scupper the lot with knives and not' ave a 'ell of a lot of squealin' that'll be 'eard to the radio stytion. Bloody mess, that's wot it'll be—and I ain't wishin' you luck." Mellish walked away, and made in the direction of the hotel.

Liscum drew closer in under the decking. The upward curve of the stem prevented him from getting down flat. He could see along both gunwales, and anything moving along them was visible against the lighter gloom beyond the shelter.

Allkirk remained leaning against the boat. Presently several figures came from the jungle, visible as they moved into the vague light among the palms. Four men appeared at each gunwale.

Before Liscum was aware of what was happening, he felt the big outrigger move on the rollers. Allkirk climbed in. One Chinese gave the orders, working fast, and panting and grunting, the men kept the boat moving over the hard-packed sand and coral. She went easily down the sloping shingle and slid into the water where the sand was dug away for a launching runway under the surface.

Paddles were brought from a lean-to. Liscum's legs were covered with matting, and under the decking he was in black darkness, difficult to penetrate by

eyes adjusted to the brightness of the moonlight. The men knelt in the bottom of the boat, Allkirk sat in what was now the stern, and at once the paddles began to drive the outrigger into the bay.

Before long Liscum could hear the voices of the fishing natives. By the light from torches seen to one side, he knew the outrigger was skirting the upper curve of the fishers. Before long he saw the masts of the *Beacon Hill* against the sky. Then he knew that the outrigger was bound for the swamp, a few hundred yards abeam of the schooner.

In a few minutes the boat scraped in among the pendent shoots falling to the water from the mangrove trees. They were thick as the sides of a basket. Once more they were in gloom, and the boat grounded in mud, after bumping into loose logs.

Allkirk and the men clambered out. Liscum heard their feet strike boarding, accompanied by the soft creak of bamboo flooring. At once they moved away.

IT was ten minutes before Liscum felt that he was safely alone. Mosquitoes assailed him. He was suddenly drenched with sweat. Little air moved in among the mangroves, and the place was humid, stifling with the odors of the disturbed tidal mud. He threw off the matting, backed out from under the decking, and lifted a cautious head over the leeboard.

There was a crude float alongside, made of logs, with cross stringers of split bamboo. And this float, in sections, extended into the swamp through a lane cut through the vines swinging from the mangroves. He could see the glistening surface of the bamboo walks in spots of moonlight for several yards deeper into the swamp. The floats became duckboards lashed above high water to the trunks of trees, forming a low bridge over the treacherous mud banks. The stink of rotting vegetation in close heat met the rankness of crocodile nests.

Bayward, through the streaming network of mangrove tendrils, Liscum could make out the hull of the *Beacon Hill*. She was not three hundred yards away, and a couple of hundred yards seaward. There were few fishing boats between him and the schooner, and most of them far ahead of her.

Something had to be done at once. There was no way of knowing when the Chinese might return. The mosquitoes became maddening. Liscum got out of the outrigger.

Then he discovered that there were several small canoes beyond the boat, moored to vines. He saw at once what he could do. But he did not want to be seen, in his white clothes.

With his knife he cut a slit in the coarse matting. He pulled it on over his head, so it covered his back and his chest. Throwing his cap into the canoe, he climbed in, and slowly worked the small craft out through the mangroves into the bay, into open moonlight.

He paddled with leisurely strokes, making a course far ahead of the schooner. He flanked the fishing boats, and moved slowly toward the landing before Mellish's hotel. The tide kept letting him back toward the schooner. No one of the fishing boats took heed of him. He looked like a native fisher in his poncho of matting.

He paddled hard against the tide until he was well clear of any boats. Then he saw another big outrigger coming from the boat beach. Another gang of Chinese were making for the swamp. With the light and fast canoe, he let the tide carry him seaward, though he paddled enough to make it appear he was not drifting. Presently he was abeam of the *Beacon Hill*.

He steered and paddled so that he drew in toward the schooner, swung

past her counter, and saw the head and shoulders of Sands at the taffrail, with a rifle. From the water, the mate was visible against the moonlit sky.

The dinghy was streamed astern the schooner on a long painter. Liscum swung in for the dinghy. He heard Sands speak to the serang, and they both moved astern, watching.

"Tommy!" called Sands in a careful voice.

"Hell!" exclaimed Sands. "That you, Skipper?"

"Drop a line with a bight over the stern."

Liscum pulled off his covering of matting. He bent it into a cone and stood it up against a thwart. He grasped the dinghy and stepped into it, letting the canoe drift away. It looked as if it still held its passenger, with the matting sticking up.

Pulling on the long painter, Liscum forced the dinghy up under the schooner's counter. The line dropped to him was in shadow. He went up hand over hand and stepped across the taffrail under the awning.

"What the devil be you doing boating around that swamp, when I thought you was at Mellish's? Been watching you since you come out of the mangroves—and I was ready to hail you when you come in close."

"Come below. Mosquitoes near chewed me up."

They left the serang on watch. Below, Liscum bathed his face and neck and hands and had a drink. He told the amazed Sands what had happened in the outrigger shelter close to Mellish's hotel.

"There's a warehouse over in that swamp, by what Allkirk said. And Mellish tried to warn me after I left for the radio station. Anyhow, he won't have a hand in killing us. Allkirk took gasoline—and I'd say they intend to board and burn the schooner. But first they'll get the trade cloth into that swamp warehouse."

"And what'd I be doing?"

"You'd be laying in the scuppers with a Chink knife in your gizzard. That gang knows what they're doing, but just how they'll do it, I don't know yet. We will. Break out Ali and the Manilaman and get 'em up with the serang. We're going to see trouble when that fishing fleet moves out, and the moon's in the lee of the hills over Tring's place."

"Some crew'll be coming back from the hill kampong's before then."

Liscum shook his head. "No, sir, they won't. Tring's sent a lot of palm toddy into the hills, and you can bet our crew'll be laid out drunk as an undertaker's apprentice after a railroad wreck. You can leave that to Tring's plans for this night's job of work."

Liscum took rifles from the gun-stand, looked the weapons over to make sure the magazines were full of cartridges, and laid out ammunition in pie plates.

"All on deck now, and keeping a sharp lookout," Sands reported. "Another big outrigger just shoved off from the boat beach and made for the swamp."

"Tring thinks we've got fifty thousand dollars' worth of turkey-red bolts below. The outriggers, and fifty husky Chinks are for the unloading job."

"And me—and the serang—and Ali and the Manilaman dead, hey?"

"Would you be cooking doughnuts in hog fat while they opened our hatches? Allkirk's got gasoline to spray on the decks after you're done for and the cargo's out and over in that swamp. They want the *Beacon Hill* to go up quick. I tell you, they'll board when the moon's over the hill."

"By God, Skipper, the sharks'll grow pigtails they'll be so full of Chinks, come morning."

"Unless they're talking through their noses like Massachusetts deacons. Tring's got a lot of bad Chinks eating

his groceries, and more of 'em than anybody suspects."

They carried rifles to the quarterdeck and laid them out on the wheel box. Then pans of ammunition were placed to be handy for magazine loading. That was a job both the serang and the Manilaman knew.

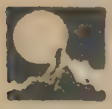
Sands took a look over the bows. "There they are, fiddling around with them logs again, up ahead."

"Logs! What logs?"

"Drift logs. One comes down on the fishing boats with the tide, and a couple of boats skylark with 'em—pushing 'em from boat to boat. They been at it all night."

Liscum looked up ahead. Many of the fishing boats were gone, but a few lingered. A group without torches appeared to be playing with a log. There was laughter among the natives as they thrust logs back and forth. Men even went into the water and swam about with a log, using it to annoy another boat.

"Just hell-raising," said Liscum. They were the same type of big hardwood logs that he had seen used for floats in the swamp edge. There were many adrift in the bay. They had been cut years before on the island for lumber, and many got adrift. The hook of the reef caught them on the ebb tide, prevented them escaping to sea, and eddies of the flood tide drifted them back again to the far end of the bay where it narrowed.



THE five men took their ease under the awning, watching all around. By midnight most of the fishing boats were gone out of the bay. No torches were burning. The boats far ahead of the *Beacon Hill* were line fishing. They continued their sport with the logs.

Slowly the moon drew down to the lofty rim of the pinnacled hills that rose sheer behind the "Flag and Anchor" hotel. The line of light that silvered the bay drew in toward shore, pursued by the black shadow that crept out of the swamp. When the moon was all gone, the bay was a black pool that made swamp, bay and high jungles all the same world—a place of deep shadows under a sky bright with moon afterglow.

There was still a gleam upon the water but it was a dead light now that was reflected from the sky. Living things in the swamp became more active. Crocodiles barked, and there were mysterious splashings. It was toward the swamp that Liscum directed his attention.

But it was not from the swamp that the first move in Tring's game developed. Paddles were heard toward the hotel. The sound drew nearer and a canoe came out of the gloom. Then Allkirk hailed.

"Hello, *Beacon Hill!* Where's the mate?"

Liscum whispered hastily. "Answer it, serang—and say the mate's asleep."

"Tuan Mate, him sl'ip below," answered the serang.

"Call him topside. Cap'n Liscum wants to talk to him."

"The hell he does!" Liscum growled. "Now we begin to get at it. Play sleepy, Tommy—and you, serang, drop below and make a fuss to rouse the mate."

"Who's that?" demanded Sands presently. "What's wanted of me?"

"Allkirk. The skipper went to the radio station and he just called up that he wants to talk to you on the telephone."

"You're under orders to stay aboard," prompted Liscum. "But draw out of him all you can."

"Well, I dunno," said Sands. "If skipper wants me, I guess I'd better go. But this is a hell of a time o' night to be telephoning. Say what he wanted to talk about?"

"Something about a message from

Masury. I can take you over and you'll be back in no time."

Sand yawned noisily. "Don't you bother now. I got to take a look around. We'll be swinging with the new tide before long, and he ought to know I've got to see just where we'll swing to. With fifty fathom o' chain out, I might touch on a shoal. There ain't anything we could do about any orders from Masury before morning, anyhow. I'm obliged to y'—but I'll come off myself in an hour or so."

"You can come or not, as you want to," said Allkirk. "If you can't take an order that I bring out, that's your troubles. It'll be a damned long time before I bother to come out here with any more errands."

"And I tell y' I got to have a look around. The glass looks like a blow's coming, and they hit quick hereabouts. You tell skipper if I don't come, it's because I don't want to leave the vessel."

"I'll tell him," said Allkirk. He spoke to the paddlers and they swung back for shore, to disappear in the deeper gloom near land.

For another half an hour they watched. Steadily, the bay grew darker as the sky overhead dulled off with the receding moon. The ebb tide was still running, but the flood was probably coming in, with the slow onset peculiar to the bay, for a tidal stream was deflected by the reef and turned inward before the bay lost the force of the ebb.

The serang's eye caught something moving on the water. It looked more like a drifting log than a boat. They all watched the object—then they heard splashing, and something scraped along the hull planking.

They could make out a black spot that seemed to fasten itself to the vessel below the main chain plates. Then they saw the blob of black come drifting astern, scraping gently along the strakes near the water.

Liscum had his rifle trained downward, as did Sands. But the excited hiss of the serang drew their attention away from the floating object. They saw something slowly lifting from the chain plates, and heard the drip of water, along with somebody panting for breath after great exertion.

Liscum, watching carefully again beneath him, made out enough of the drifting object to know it was a small canoe which had been abandoned. It was a paddle which scraped—a paddle sticking up over a gunwale. Liscum, sure the canoe held no person, let it go astern without paying any more attention to it.

A man was climbing the bulwarks—slowly, and with great caution—and presently his bare feet smacked upon the deck. Those watching from the quarterdeck pit of blackness gave no sign.

They saw the figure move aft a little, then pause. The man followed the darker portion of the deck, close in against the bulwarks.

He was breathing heavily, in quick gasps, and did his best not to reveal himself by his efforts to regain normal breathing, with silence.

Then suddenly he spoke, in nervous but subdued tones. "Look 'ere, don't shoot!" he pleaded. "I don't mean no 'arm! It's the mate I wants, Mr. Sands!"

Then, as if his sudden gust of fear disgusted him, Mellish growled, "Blast that rope!" Then, in a louder tone, he lifted his head and addressed the quarterdeck. "I say, Mr. Sands! Don't be a ruddy fool, now! I'm aboard 'ere, but I ain't on no job for Tring and the likes o' 'is lot. I'm with you."

"Let him up," Liscum whispered. "He's safe—but no word that I'm aboard until I speak."

"That you, Mellish?" asked Sands, in little better than a whisper.

"It's only me, yus! Mind your eye, Mister Mate. They've let a knife in the skipper, if I ain't balmy, and they'd

bloody well like to do the same to you —and they won't be long a-doin' of it."

"Good God, come up," said Sands. "The less anybody hears—the better."

Mellish climbed the steps. His clothes dripped water as he stood under the lip of the awning, his figure outlined vaguely. He hesitated for a minute, as if his welcome made him suspicious.

"I pushed my canoe into deep water," said Mellish. "Allkirk come out—and 'e near caught me leavin' shore when 'e comes back. That's w'y I'm wettish."

"What'd you come for?" demanded Sands.

Mellish drew in under the awning, but he did not advance into the deeper gloom. "It's about skipper—'e 'opped out for the radio stytion on word Masury sent orders. I didn't know just wot the gyme was then—but I tried to catch 'im and stop 'im. It's Tring that's goin' to make trouble for you—and I'm afraid skipper's dead. Allkirk, 'e's put petrol in a boat to come this side—and that mean you'll be burned if you don't watch out."

"I'm glad you came out, Mellish," said Liscum quietly.

Mellish stood rigid for more than a minute. "My Gawd, I thort you was dead!" And then hurriedly, "I've 'ad my suspicions about Tring a long time, but I never let on wot I twigged. Too many Chinks about, that don't work regular, and Tring keeps 'em 'id away. 'E's got pearlin' luggers—and they moves things in 'ere, and moves 'em out. Under'and, you understand—and now I'd say they intend to scupper the lot of you, empty the vessel, and burn 'er. I wanted to get you alone to give a bit o' warnin', but I 'ad no chance. My own Chinks was watchin' me the minute Allkirk got out for Tring's when you was at my place —and before I could sneak a word in endways—you was gone."

"Come in here and sit down. You left no light at the hotel?"

"No, sir. I wanted 'em to think I'd made for bed so as not to know anythink."

The Cockney found a stool and had a drink.

CAPTAIN LISCUM was suddenly aware of a surprising change in the schooner's condition. Though the tide had slacked somewhat, the anchor chain was still taut, and the vessel had the slight movement of water running under her. That barely perceptible tremor stopped. While Liscum and Sands, suddenly alert, waited to see if the vessel would be alive again, and wondering if the tide was at a stand, the serang, who was watching over the side, hissed and spoke with alarm. "Cap'n! Tuan Cap'n! She go sternway!"

Liscum and Sands were on their feet at once, they caught the palms of the horizon along the outer swamp, and saw that the vessel was moving astern toward the reef. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the *Beacon Hill* was moving with the last of the ebb.

"We're not dragging the anchor," whispered Liscum. "We'd feel a jerk along the chain." She was adrift as smoothly as if no chain were out and no anchor down in hard sand fifty fathoms ahead of them.

Suddenly bare wet feet smacked the main deck planking, and lurking forms, moving slowly aft, could be seen from the break of the quarterdeck.

"They're aboard us!" whispered Liscum. "Here, Mellish, take this rifle and go port side with Sands—but nobody shoot before I do!" The captain moved forward to the break of the deck. He had both automatics and a flashlight.

Liscum threw the light beams downward. His eyes caught six black shapes below before he flashed the light. Then he saw Chinese, clad only in breech cloths, gleam yellowly under the illumination. The steel glinted whitely in their hands.

Crouched forward as they advanced, they were moving aft. They stopped abruptly, and those near the steps under Liscum, were momentarily blinded.

There was a shrill cry from overside. More Chinese, in boats alongside, stood ready to board at the main chains.

"Tell the damned fools to keep going!" came Allkirk's voice from one of the boats. "Light won't hurt 'em!"

A sputter of Chinese words, angrily strident, broke from the water. Tring's voice. A new rush of feet on deck, and the sound of men scrambling over the bulwarks. Men swarmed aboard.

A man mounted to the quarterdeck. Liscum fired. The figure loomed up against the brightness of the distant sky. The head curled back, and a Chinese scream trailed after the report of Liscum's pistol.

Sands began firing—and Mellish. And the serang and the Manilaman firing into the dark shapes of the boats. Liscum fired again, again.

Tring's voice broke out in fury. There came the bell-like tinkling of metal at the chain-plates. Somebody was getting Allkirk's can of gasoline aboard. There was a hammering at the battens of the forehatch, and 'paulins ripped. Men whose business it was to get the hatches open were on the job by the time Liscum's first shot gave warning that there was to be more than steel in the fight.

Sands and Mellish kept two streams of bullets spraying on the maindeck. Splintering planks, the sing of bullets that hit wood slantwise and caromed upward was drowned out by the screams of Chinese hit.

Allkirk, cursing, was on the maindeck —and Tring was aboard. That gunfire would betray to listeners ashore a battle aboard the schooner. If one man escaped from the vessel Allkirk knew he would be involved in the crime of piracy.

He moved aft, began firing his revolver up at the quarterdeck. He saw no target. He fired to break the panic among the Chinese.

Over Liscum's head the gambler's bullets needled the canvas. One hit metal and whirred past like a hornet in frenzy. Through this, Tring raged at his Chinese. Some charged aft. They were blasted back from the steps as they tried to gain the quarterdeck.

Chinese dove overboard. Voices in the boats jabbered. Swimmers were pulled out. Liscum could see half a dozen big outriggers. They were all around the schooner. The serang and Ali and the Manilaman's fire punished the boat's crews. The three white men raked the deck below them in steady streams of lead, Liscum holding his fire for definite figures close at hand.

Liscum's light caught Allkirk, striding aft, yelling, gun high.

Mellish, glimpsing the gambler, yelped. "A 'ell of a nice job o' work for the likes o' you, y' swine." The cockney's rifle jumped.

Tring, recognizing Mellish's voice, raged in fury. Then, in a lull of the rifles, Allkirk's voice, weakly venomous, came up from the maindeck.

"The limey—got me, Tring!"

"You came to the wrong place looking for pearls, Allkirk." It was Liscum who spoke.

"Tring!" Allkirk yelled, his voice rising to a wailing note. "You lied! You didn't—kill him, damn your yellow hide! You didn't kill him. You—walked me into this! That's Liscum—and but for him—I wouldn't be shot. You tried to leave me here to—Allkirk's voice died out in a peculiar gurgle.

But Liscum's mind was drawn from the maindeck. There came a terrific pound under the stern. It lifted. The drifting schooner had struck the reef. She reeled and swung broadside to the coral barrier. It gnawed at her bilges. She stopped her way with a jerk that strained the standing rigging. She listed deeply to port. That was the side near-

est the swamp. Her keel, as she listed, swung higher up on the coral heads. The heads crumbled under her. She lodged on them. As she steadied, her decks were aslant.

Tring's voice broke in a terrorized babble. Then he gave a tearing scream.

The guns were silent. All the confusion now was overside as swimmers yelled and the outriggers made desperately for the swamp. The spatter of frantic paddles marked retreat. Wounded men in the water begged to be picked up and were abandoned. Boats turned back at times to gather up some babbling swimmer. The shore was near, but they feared sharks, for the water was bloodied by the wounded.

Tring's cries rose to new frenzy. There was a scuffling. Somebody was clawing and struggling.

Shoes were pounding along the deck. Liscum threw his light down, cautious not to expose himself.

Chinese, lying about, in all postures, and motionless, and beyond Allkirk clinging to a man, who was struggling to get to the bulwarks on the port side.

"Damn you!" Allkirk's gurgling voice spluttered. "I've got mine—and you won't get away—you yellow swine!" He spat, and grunted with pain.

Tring squealed in terror. The bulwarks stopped his retreat from the gambler. There was a desperate clawing at the planks. Liscum's light, at its extremity of brilliance, revealed Allkirk rising to his knees. With an arm, palsied from pain, or a bullet, the gambler slowly lifted a revolver. He thrust it forward toward Tring as if to spike with the gun the body of the Chinese to the bulwarks.

Tring's thin yellow face was clear to Liscum's eyes. The mouth gaped open, and again, with all the breath in his lungs, he squealed, horror in the tones as he stared into Allkirk's revolver.

A flash of red broke, burst in Tring's face. A scream was cut—and never finished.

For Tring's body bowed forward. The gambler fell backward just as he pulled the trigger a second time. The jet of flame went heavenward, and the bullet splintered into the gaff, and with a note of twanging hate, flew away at a tangent.

" 'E's done for 'im! And a ruddy good job! Serves 'im bloody well right for fightin' white men!"

Liscum kept his light on the two tangled figures. Neither of them moved.

SOMETHING went over the bows and struck the water. Some wounded Chinese had crawled to the forecastlehead to get out of the vessel. And by now there was wild chattering in the swamp, as the outriggers fought for the landing place at the floats or floundered among the mud banks to get to the hiding place beyond the mangroves.

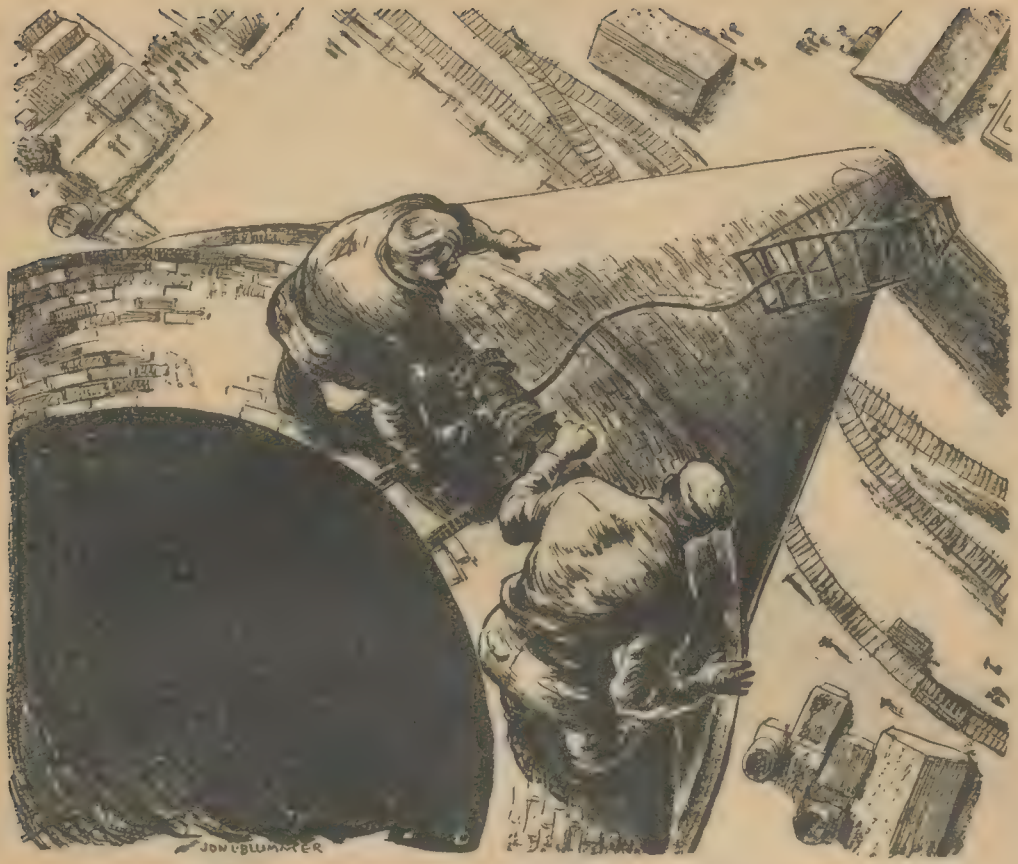
Crocodiles, disturbed, began to bellow. The voices of natives along the shore came across the water.

"Get some of your help to go to the radio station and get a cutter here," Liscum directed Mellish. The hotel keeper cupped his hands to his mouth, and bawled. He got an answer from one of his Malays.

"How in the hell that anchor dragged," said Liscum, "I don't know. We can get a kedge out at daylight, and pull her off, but I believe the flood'll float us. No surf to pound us."

The mystery of the dragged anchor was solved at daylight. The logs natives had played with had been submerged, made fast by lines carried down by native pearl divers, and then the logs rolled so the lines took up. With the lift of the flood tide, the anchor was scowed up and the *Beacon Hill* put adrift to strike the reef, have her holds looted, and be set afire with only dead men aboard her.

THE END



STEEPLEJACK'S VERTIGO

by John Thomas

(An off-the-trail story)

THE CHIMNEY was falling before our eyes. When we got to the works that morning the first thing we did was plumb the stack about a dozen feet up from the base. We plumbed it again at lunch time. There was a difference of one-twelfth of an inch. In other words, the top of the stack had swung six inches out of the perpendicular in as many hours. The chimney was toppling over at the rate of an inch an hour.

We were working on a job up at the I. C. I. place outside Pittsburgh. The five tall chimneys there are well-known landmarks in the district. They are all over three hundred feet. They have to be high to carry the poisonous fumes well into the upper atmosphere.

On Thursday afternoon our Philadelphia headquarters had received a phone call from the Works Manager saying that he thought No. 3 chimney required repairs. It had been damaged in a recent gale. Would I step over and have a look at it?

When Nick Tirado, my leading assistant, and myself arrived at the works early on Friday we found that the manager had thought rightly—only he had

been too long in thinking. The brickwork at the base of the stack was rotten. The masonry was cracked in a dozen places, and it actually crumbled when we hit it with a hammer. We decided there and then that the stack had to come down. It was a menace to public safety.

The felling of a giant chimney is a ticklish job at any time, but that one presented special difficulties. The main trouble was that we had no place to drop it. The yards and factories of the I. C. I. plant covered twenty acres of ground, and No. 3 stood at the end of a low block of buildings close to the eastern boundary of the firm's premises. To throw the stack toward the east was impossible. There was a yard between the stack and the boundary wall where some of the bricks would fall, but most of the debris would thunder down on a large isolation hospital just over the way from the works. The stack had to be dropped on the company's property.

After some consideration we fixed on a feasible plan. Buildings equipped with expensive plants clustered round the base of the chimney, and to send twenty-three hundred tons of masonry down on the roofs would cause an enormous amount of damage. There was, however, a railroad track running up between two blocks on the northwest side of the stack, and although this space was too short to receive the whole three hundred and ten feet of the giant we planned to make the best of a bad job. We decided, first of all, to scale the chimney, and take off the uppermost hundred feet brick by brick. After that the stump would be short enough to throw into the railroad siding.

It was then we made the amazing discovery that the chimney was falling—and falling toward the hospital. A speedy calculation revealed that the stack would lose its equilibrium in one and a half days. At the end of that time, unless we could do something, the whole mass would collapse. To remove the upper part brick by brick was at least a three weeks' job. Our former scheme was entirely out of the question. There was no time to be lost. We planned right away to go up and dynamite the top hundred feet and then doctor the remainder of the stack so that its line of fall would be toward the railroad.

The fussy little works manager nearly had a fit when we told him of the condition of his chimney. You would have thought by the way he talked that *we* had made a wreck of it. Nevertheless, we did our best to convince him that the only way to avert an appalling disaster was to have the stack dismantled with all possible haste.

The civic authorities were notified of the danger, and hurried arrangements were made to have the patients removed from the hospital. As soon as the populace learned that a million and a quarter bricks were perhaps to shower down on them excitement rose to an absurd pitch. Folks began to remove their belongings from the houses round the factory. Mobs of curious spectators arrived on the scene to view the falling chimney, but they were kept at a distance by a strong police cordon.

Then came shock number two. The ink was just drying on our official contract with the I. C. I. when two visitors turned up at the works, and demanded to see the steeplejack who was working on the job. I wondered what anybody could want with me at that time, but I decided it would be as well to see them.

They were waiting for me in the outer office. One wore a white jacket; the other was a young fellow about twenty-five, obviously in a great state of nerves. Then I heard the story. The white-jacketed individual was a doctor from the hospital. He explained to me that one of his patients—his companion's wife—was critically ill with a fever and

could on no account be moved out of the hospital in accordance with the newly-issued decree. Movement would almost certainly result in death. What the men wanted to know was whether there was any real danger of the chimney falling over the hospital.

I would have liked to tell them that the danger was extremely remote, but I could not honestly do that. At the moment I saw no reason why my plans for throwing the stack away from the hospital should not succeed, but on the other hand, there was no saying what might happen to a crazy chimney in a strong breeze. Stronger stacks had given way in my hands before now. However, I assured the doctor that there was no immediate danger, although I also advised him to get the lady out of the hospital at the earliest possible moment. When they were leaving the office the young man begged me to see that nothing went wrong with the felling operations.

The vision of the young fellow's haggard face was still with me when fifteen minutes later we were carting out gear to the base of the stack. Suddenly the little worm of a works manager came ferreting up to me, and called me aside.

"Mr. McCarty," he bleated, "make no mistakes here. The works must be damaged as little as possible."

"We'll do our best—but we're not promising wonders," I said.

He glanced toward the hospital.

"I heard that story," he said. "You needn't let it interfere. She is going to die anyway."

I turned so sick at the idea that I believe if I had been aloft at the moment I would have crashed to the ground. Did this little rat think I would not concentrate all my effort on keeping the stack from lobbing onto the hospital simply to save his works? I gave him a look twenty degrees below zero, and stamped off to join my assistant.

"I pay you good money," he shouted after me. "And remember the terms of the contract."

WE BEGAN our ascent of the chimney shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon. For this purpose we had brought up three hundred and ten feet of light steel ladder in ten-foot lengths. An iron dog was firmly secured at the base of the stack and to this the first length of ladder was lashed. We climbed the first ten feet, I leading and Nick close behind. The second length of ladder was hauled up at the end of a rope, and fixed to the top of the first ladder by a socket arrangement. Then we climbed to the twenty-foot mark, and fixed a third ladder in position. In this way we advanced slowly but surely to the top of the stack. The continuous line of ladders rose further and further up the side, and with each new piece we climbed ten feet nearer the sky.

By a quarter past four we were a hundred and fifty feet up—not bad going. Far below roofs of houses and factories spread out toward the open country. We could see the upturned faces of the masses below. We must have looked like flies to them.

Climbing conditions were by no means perfect. A strong wind howled round the stack, and tore at our clothes. Heavy clouds blowing up from the south spoke of rain. And above all, we knew that darkness would fall soon, and impede our progress considerably. Quite frankly, less experienced steeplejacks never would have tackled the job. They would have blasted the stack as it stood, and let the debris fall in the most convenient place.

Our idea was to get to the summit of the chimney, and loop a stout steel hawser round the circumference. The other end of the hawser would be attached to a donkey engine on the ground. On our way down we intended

plugging a few sticks of dynamite a hundred feet from the top. Once we reached the ground, and safety, the charge would explode, and the hawser would guide the severed portion of the chimney in the desired direction. The job was a difficult one, but we had made a success of a similar one, and we weren't worrying too much—about the technical aspects, I mean.

But the thought of that woman lying in the hospital ward preyed on my mind. I felt that her life lay in my hands as much as in the doctor's. I could not help thinking of the anguish the husband would experience if something went wrong, and he saw the whole mass of chimney falling over toward the hospital. And when I thought of the callous, self-seeking weasel down below I almost wished that the chimney would sweep down and wipe out his works, lock, stock and barrel.

There was that contract to think of, though. In accordance with our usual practice we had agreed to demand only twenty-five per cent of our professional fee if the felling of the chimney caused damage exceeding seventy-five hundred dollars to the surrounding buildings. This was our guarantee of clean workmanship. It was a bargain we made with all our customers, and on very few occasions had we forfeited money.

We climbed on in silence, never exchanging a word. Steelejacks do not usually converse with each other during a climb. Their job is too perilous. It requires all the concentration man can give.

Our watches indicated five-thirty when we reached the spot immediately below the decorative cornicing at the top of the chimney. We were now faced with the most difficult part of the climb. The shelving ledge above bulged several feet outward, and to reach the coping at the summit we had to round that formidable obstacle. That meant that we had to crawl across the under surface of the ledge with our bodies almost parallel to the ground.

We paused for a minute or two before we made the hazardous attempt. Nick held on to the top of the ladder, and I led the way. Feeling for support with my hands and feet I wormed round the projection like a fly crawling on a ceiling. It was nerve-racking work. A slight slip would have spelled horrible death. But heights do not worry the men in our trade. All the same, enormous skill and care were demanded. The birds had pecked away much of the mortar, and the loose bricks formed a very insecure grip. Moreover, the masonry was coated with an inch-deep layer of greasy soot which made climbing nothing short of treacherous. And the steadily rising wind didn't improve matters.

By pressing my knees hard against the brickwork I was able to force my head and shoulders above the ridge. In a few more seconds I was peering over the top. I was actually holding on to the lip of the chimney with my hands while my legs were dangling in the empty air. A series of wriggles and a final heave brought me safely to the surface. I stood erect on the coping and shouted down to my partner. I could not see him because of the bulging cornice work, but he hailed me, and presently he was working round the projection with the aid of the rope I had dropped. Inside of two minutes he also had his feet on the coping.

The great black, yawning mouth of the chimney was fifteen feet in diameter, and the coping on which we were standing was some eighteen inches wide. It was coated with four or five inches of mushy grime into which we sank up to the ankles. The experience certainly was not a pleasant one, but it was all in a day's work.

THE first part of the program consisted of hauling aloft a light winch, necessary for raising the steel cable. Nick uncoiled a thin rope he had brought with him and lowered it earthward. It took several minutes to reach the ground, and in a few more minutes our winch was soaring skyward. We speedily lashed the apparatus to the coping, and attached the end of the rope to the barrel. Once again the rope descended, and the hawser was fastened to the end.

The winch was double-handled. Nick wound one handle and I wound the other. At first the barrel rotated briskly, but every foot of cable which wound off the drum below added to the weight on the winch. By the time the end of the cable was half way up the chimney our muscles were reaching breaking point. The heavily-taxed winch was creaking ominously. We imagined our arms were too. In spite of the fresh, cool wind our overalls were soft with sweat. Frequent rests were necessary, and the best we could do was raise the cable in short spasmodic jerks.

Night had almost fallen by the time the hawser arrived at the point under the cornicing. The wind had risen to gale force, and large drops of rain were beginning to spat down on us. Away below, the lights of the city twinkled against the drab gray ground. Immediately below the long, rectangular hospital block was discernible in the gloom. It was black and shadowy except for a light burning in one window. How eerie and lonely we felt up there with darkness settling mysteriously down on us!

We did not anticipate any special bother in hauling the cable over the cornice. But it seemed as if Nature were determined to frustrate our plans. The end of the cable was actually in sight, two armlengths below us, when the threatening storm burst on us in full fury. The sudden explosive violence of the first blast crashing on us as it did absolutely without warning, all but swept us from our lofty pinnacle. Had it not been for the fact that we were gripping the winch handles with both hands we would have been hurtling earthward like a couple of dislodged bricks.

The same mighty blast tore and wrenched at the suspended cable. There was a snap like a pistol shot. The pressure on the winch relaxed suddenly, and the barrel rotated loosely. When we looked over the side we could see the snaky coil spinning rapidly toward the ground. My assistant was first to discover the real gravity of our position.

"Mr. McCarty," he yelled, "the ladder's gone."

Apprentice days excepted, I could number on the fingers of one hand all the occasions when a fit of horror has seized me while aloft. This was one of the occasions. In its plunge downward the loop of the hawser had caught on the top of the ladder, and wrenched a large section of it away. The twisted steelwork had been dragged down to the ground. There was a gap of seventy feet between us and the section of the ladder which remained fixed to the lower part of the stack. We had no way of bridging that gap. We were marooned—marooned at the top of a falling chimney.

When the first almost overwhelming wave of despair passed, I sat astride the coping, and hammered an iron dog into the masonry. Nick followed suit. The dogs gave us a good firm grip for our hands. Had we remained on our feet much longer we would have been bowled over, so great was the severity of the gale.

There we sat, one leg dangling over the side of the chimney, the other hanging down the yawning mouth. Our hands grasped the iron pegs with a death clutch. The howling, shrieking wind smashed against our bodies. The drenching torrent turned every stick of

clothing we possessed into a sodden, spongy pulp. The driving particles of rain bit cruelly into our unprotected faces like so many sharp-pointed needles.

How long we clung to that coping I do not know. It seemed like hours. Possibly it was only half an hour. At any rate the storm died out as suddenly as it had risen. The rain ceased, and the wind dropped. I released my numbed hands from the iron peg. So desperate had been my grip, and so feelingless were my hands, that I could scarcely uncrook my fingers.

"Are you all right?" I shouted to my assistant.

"Yes, boss," he answered cheerily.

He was a good worker, Nick Tirado. He had plenty of nerve, and all the grit and courage necessary for successful steeplejacking.

"What's the next item in the program?" he added. "Have you any suggestions to make about getting down?"

We rose cautiously to our feet and carried out a close examination of the stack. As we moved, our waterlogged garments clung to our skins. I felt just like an under-water diver whose diving suit had developed a leak.

Our position was hopeless. It was more evident than ever that we could not reach the ground by any methods we might try. Our sole hope lay in the people on the ground coming to our rescue by laddering the gap. And the chances of that happening—at least within the ensuing few hours—were remote. There were no steeplejacks in Pittsburgh who could tackle the job. We knew we would have to wait until our own men arrived from Philadelphia, and they couldn't get to us before morning. The prospect of spending the middle hours of the night in the upper air was not exactly alluring.

"We'll just have to stick up here until the stack falls," I remarked. "It will save us a lot of bother by taking us down with it."

"One consolation," replied the ever cheery Tirado, "is that we are as near heaven now as ever we will be—unless we live to climb a higher stack, which is doubtful. We may as well take advantage of the honor."

We sat down on the coping again. By this time it was ten o'clock and the last tinge of daylight had disappeared. Parallel rows of lights marked the streets and avenues. In the yard below, lamps were bobbing here and there. Laborers seemed to be engaged in salvaging the tangled cable. We presumed that the folks on the ground were thoroughly aware of our plight, and that skilled hands had been summoned from our headquarters. We had no means of communicating with the world.

The hour of our rescue we placed at 7 A. M. It would be that time before our colleagues could reach the factory and scale the chimney.

We kept ourselves cheery by talking about the method we would employ in felling the stack. But after a while conversation lagged. We were content to listen to the medley of sounds which drifted up to us from the city. The distant honk of an automobile horn was occasionally audible. We heard the people below shouting to us, but the distance was too great for us to make out their message. Once we watched a train roaring along a railroad not far from the foot of the stack. It was five miles away when we first spotted it. We identified it by the crimson beam which shot from the furnace into the blackness of the sky. The beam rushed nearer and nearer and at length the lighted cars were visible. Like a glow-worm the train slid on. It was fascinating to watch. When the cars rumbled past the factory the stack trembled perceptibly for several seconds.

Not long afterward a clock somewhere boomed out twelve dismal strokes.

The long night wore on. We exchanged an occasional remark, but for the most part we were silent. We had no food, and hunger began to increase the discomfort of our position. The solitary light in the hospital ward was a source of anxiety. I would have felt better if I had looked and seen that it was out. The clock below tolled out the strokes. Days seemed to elapse between the hours.

About three o'clock the wind rose again. It was not a gusty, squally wind this time, but a strong, steady breeze which made the stack rock rhythmically. Normally that would have been nothing to be alarmed about. The public is not generally aware that all high towers and chimneys rock considerably in a high wind. They have to be able to yield to the wind pressure a little or else they would be liable to be blown over. However the rocking was not particularly desirable on a stack with a crumbling base.

Number 3 developed and maintained a gyroscopic motion. We felt as if we were passengers on a storm-tossed liner. The same feeling of nausea was produced. After an hour my assistant became violently sick. I made him lie flat on the coping with his face toward the clouds.

Our friend, the clock, pealed out the solitary stroke which denoted half past four. The wind had dropped and Nick had largely recovered from his attack. It was a moonless night, but the sky was studded with stars. We seemed to be much nearer to those stars than to the lights below. Together we scanned the eastern sky for signs of dawn. Few sounds came to us from the ground now. A curious silence seemed to lie over everything.

AT LAST a gray line began to show between the black sky and the earth. The band of gray broadened and paled.

"Came the dawn!" mocked Nick.

The grayness spread up the sky until all the bowl above our head was bathed in a diffused glow. Then the eastern edge turned pale yellow. The color deepened and like a bright golden coin the sun pushed its rim above the horizon.

No steeplejack ever witnessed a more amazing spectacle. We were instantly bathed in sunshine. It was as though a powerful searchlight had been turned on us. The tops of the other four big shafts—and only the tops—were also brilliantly illuminated, while the lower portions and the ground were still gray. As the yellow ball ascended quickly above the horizon the band of light extended further and further down the chimneys, and in a short time the ground was flooded with sunlight.

A surprise awaited us. The crowds of people were still there. There were hundreds of them, all gazing up at the chimney. They must have been there all night.

"Fancy us feeling lonely, and all that mob down there," shouted Nick.

I stood on the parapet and waved my arm. A roar rose from the crowd, and hundreds of arms shot into the air in reply to my salute.

"Hail McCarty!" roared my assistant.

The coming of day relieved our feelings. We sat down on the coping again to await the arrival of our colleagues.

By this time the stack was very much out of the perpendicular. Viewed from the ground it must have looked worse than the leaning Tower of Pisa. When we looked downward it seemed to us that the chimney was in the act of falling. It was a curious illusion. The disturbing feature was that we knew it would not be an illusion if we did not get off our perch in an hour or two.

"How long do you think it will be before the stack crashes?" asked Nick.

"It can't last longer than mid-day—and we have the dickens of a lot of

work to get done before then," I answered ruefully.

We sat together for a while without speaking. It was annoying to think that those doll-like people away down there could do nothing to help us. I wondered vaguely just when assistance would come.

After nearly an hour Nick turned to me.

"Mr. McCarty," he said, "I'm knocking off for breakfast."

"Right you are, son," I answered without looking up. "Off you go."

And then I glanced in my assistant's direction. I froze with horror. He was standing on the edge of the coping with his arms poised above his head ready to dive off the chimney. As I watched his body tilted gracefully outward. I lunged forward, and grabbed his legs. I was just in time. A second later he would have been plunging earthward.

I knew what had happened. Nick had fallen a victim of the dreaded "steeplejack's vertigo." The disease is rare, but men who work at great heights sometimes get it. The victims are seized with a sudden maddening fit of giddiness, and during the attack they will do any crazy thing. Sometimes they cling to the top of a spire or stack and refuse to let go. Sometimes they jump over the side.

I landed Nick with a thud on the parapet. He struggled wildly, but I hung on to him like grim death. He screamed like a trapped animal, and snapped at my clothing with his teeth. Our position was precarious. A slight roll to one side would have resulted in both of us crashing headlong down the interior of the shaft. Any movement to the other side would have sent us over the outside rim.

I tightened my hold. The man's short gulping breaths told me that he was rapidly becoming exhausted. Inwardly I prayed that he would either return to his normal senses or lapse into unconsciousness.

Suddenly his body gave a mighty heave. I was temporarily off my guard, and I was sent spinning backward. I thrust out my right hand to steady myself. But I had not accounted for the narrowness of the coping. Instead of leaning my hand on the solid masonry I placed it in the empty mouth of the stack.

Have you ever dreamed that you were falling down a flight of stairs? The sensation I felt was the same a thousand times exaggerated. When I found myself sinking backward my stomach rushed up to where my Adam's apple should have been. Quick as lightning I grasped an iron peg with my left hand and jerked myself away from the pit. The whole incident must have taken place in a split second.

When I regained my balance Nick was on his feet. He rushed to the edge of the coping. I grabbed at him again.

Too late!

He jumped just as my fingers touched his clothing.

The memory of the next few moments will haunt me until my dying day. He was falling—falling—falling. Maybe you have read that when climbers crash into Alpine ravines their companions are so overcome with horror that they cover their faces with their hands and yell. I was not like that. I was overcome all right, but I could not take my eyes off the falling man. I felt like the bird that is attracted by the serpent. I was horribly fascinated. I watched him going down—down.

I did not see him stop. The bottom was too far away for that. Besides, a red mist rose in front of my eyes and blinded me.

I felt a mad desire to follow my mate. The horrible vertigo was gaining a hold on me as well. I actually scrambled to my feet, and stood on the brink of the chimney. Then I flopped down on the sooty coping and trembled.

I LAY there for at least an hour. The next thing I remember seeing was a boy's kite floating in the air a short distance from the chimney. The thing drew closer to where I was lying.

My senses came back with a rush. Feeling returned to my semi-paralyzed limbs. I realized what was happening. The people on the ground were trying to fly the kite over the stack so that I could get hold of it, and haul something up by the aid of the string.

The kite fluttered nearer the chimney. It was only ten feet away. I put out my hand to grab it the moment it came within my reach. But an unexpected gust of wind caused it to bob away from me, and it passed the stack too far off to be touched.

When the kite flyers below saw what had happened they turned and started to run back across the yard. The kite, accordingly, stopped and began to float toward me again. It sailed beautifully over the coping. I was able to grasp the "tail", and a few moments later I was hauling away rapidly at the string. A rope had been attached at the bottom and inside ten minutes I had the end of it in my hands. A space of seconds was sufficient for me to loop the rope round the coping. In less time than it takes to tell I was sliding earthward.

Eventually, my feet touched the broken-off end of the ladder. I was then nearly seventy feet from the summit. I descended another thirty feet, and got busy on the stack. Several bricks were soon dislodged, and into the niches in the brickwork I stuck my sticks of dynamite. My final task was to set the fuse and scurry like mad down the remaining two hundred feet of the ladder.

There was a small congregation of works officials at the bottom to welcome me. I did not waste time.

"Clear out!" I bellowed. "The stack is coming down on you in a minute.

That made them hustle. They scuttled away like frightened rabbits, and hid themselves in the office building. I dodged into a shack not a score of feet away from the chimney, but on the side opposite to that on which I hoped the debris would fall. I looked at my watch. The fuse still had fifty seconds to go before it did its work. Whistles were screaming at the far side of the yard. Evidently the police were driving the spectators well back from the factory. The hands of the watch moved slowly round the dial. Thirty seconds—twenty—fifteen—ten—two.

Time was up. Nothing happened. Another thirty seconds passed. Still nothing happened. I began to wonder if the rain had affected the dynamite. And then there was a sharp report and a puff of smoke.

The top part of the stack leaned majestically over. It tilted very slowly at first, but it soon gathered speed. Presently the whole hundred feet broke away from the main chimney and hurtled down to earth in one massive piece. It made no sound at all until the six hundred tons of bricks landed with a deafening crash in the yard. The debris missed the railway siding, but fortunately enough demolished only a few unimportant outhouses.

I was in the act of patting myself on the back when I saw something that made my heart miss a dozen beats. The two hundred feet of chimney that remained were swaying wildly from side to side. The force of the debris hitting the ground had loosened the foundations. It was obvious to me that the entire stack was going to thunder down at any moment. Over it rocked until it was at least ten feet out of the perpendicular. Then it stood still. Seconds later it was swinging over toward the other side—the hospital side. It was only then that I remembered the woman. The drama of the last hour had made me forget. Over—over—over—I felt sure it was finished that time—but

no. It swung back to the other side again and leaned with all its weight on the air.

Suddenly I saw a man rushing out from the base of the chimney. There were two police officers at his heels, but they stopped and retreated when they saw the lurching stack. The stranger stumped blindly over the yard. He plunged over a railroad switch and went sprawling, but he picked himself up and came blundering my way. When he came nearer I ran out and hauled him into the shelter. He was the young fellow I had seen the day before.

If ever a man was hysterical he was. He had no idea who I was. He sank down on the floor and wept.

"Mary, Mary," he screamed, clutching at my legs with both hands. "Stop it—stop it—stop it." They told me afterward that the suspense had beat him, and that he rushed out of the hospital in a frenzy.

The chimney kept oscillating like a huge inverted pendulum, and the arc it described was becoming longer with every swing. There was no knowing where it was going to fall. The brickwork at the base creaked and groaned and dozens of bricks fell out every time the stack leaned over. Sometimes it swung over in my direction and I cowered instinctively.

One time it leaned over and did not regain its balance. The massive stack reeled and tottered like a drunken man. A sudden gust of wind from the *right* direction finished the job. The vast tower of masonry lurched over toward one of the central workshops. With a fiendish roar the stack hit the roof, and brought the whole building tumbling about it. Half a million dollars' worth of equipment was flattened in the twinkling of an eye. The thud of the falling masonry created a miniature earth tremor.

I could have whooped with delight at this result. The poor whimpering fellow on the floor was too far gone to realize his good fortune.

I saw the mass of debris plunging down on the factory. After that nothing was visible. A great cloud of choking dust at once filled the atmosphere, and obliterated everything as completely as if it were a Newfoundland fog. It was impossible to penetrate that barrier of sand during the first five minutes after the fall.

Presently I left the fellow in the shed, and lumbered through the murk to where I thought the offices were situated. When I got there some frightened officials were gazing uncertainly through a window which had been badly cracked by repercussion.

The manager met me at the door. His face was like a bloater.

"What do you mean, McCarty?" he spluttered. "My buildings in ruins! Machinery made scrap iron! My whole organization dislocated! You'll pay for it."

Sure, I'd pay for it. Seventy-five per cent of my fee gone West. Maybe not another job for a long time. I'd pay for it in the sight of Nick turning and twisting, falling in front of me, nights when I couldn't sleep. You don't lose that kind of picture easily, not at my age.

But there was another kind of pay, too, and another kind of picture. The picture of a weazened, dollar-grubbing shrimp wailing over his broken toys of industry, while beside the ruins another wall stood, good as the day it was made. The wall of a hospital, with a sick woman inside, safe.

They sort of balanced each other, those pictures. I found I could smile as I left him.

THE FEUD AT SINGLE SHOT

by Luke Short

(Third of Five Parts.)

Synopsis:

DAVE TURNER and his friend Rosy Rand, whom he had met when both were incarcerated in the Yuma pen, were on their way back to Dave's ranch near Single Shot when their train was held up by robbers seeking three mine payrolls in the baggage car—a hold-up which was averted mostly through their efforts. This was less of a surprise to them than the reception they got at the town, where the sheriff told them to ride on to the next station, apparently because Dave was considered a bad man, although the crime for which he was sent away seemed to most people justifiable. At the next stop, Soledad, Dave's sister met them, to report that the D Bar T was in a bad way. Nesters were bothering them and a man named Hammond had started a gold mine in a near-by arroyo and was claiming a lake on Dave's land. On the way home Dave was shot from ambush, but Rosy killed the shooter. It took Dave only one night to recover from his wound and from his astonishment at learning his sister had married an Easterner named Winters, so the following day he and Rosy took the body of the ambusher into Single Shot, where the sheriff attempted to run them out of town again, expressing doubt about the killing.

The following chapter was omitted by error from the last installment and is printed here in its proper position in the story.

CHAPTER X

DEADMAN'S CLUE

"YOU say you got a dead man out there?" the sheriff asked.

"If you wasn't so knot-headed, you'd have known that two minutes ago," Rosy said. "You reckon we're goin' to camp at the edge of town and whistle for you?"

"Show me the body," the sheriff said.

He picked his guns off the desk and leathered them. It was a gesture of peace.

The dead man was brought in and taken into a back room of the office, and laid on a cot. Sheriff Lowe listened to the story of the bushwhacking, then looked at the man.

"Nothin' in the pockets and no brand on the horse, huh?" he growled.

"No. You seen him around town?" Dave asked.

When the sheriff replied, it was as if the incidents of a few minutes ago had not occurred. "Nary once. I don't aim to fergit birds like that, but you can't always be sure. People's driftin' in and out all the time since this gold's been found. Might be he's been votin' here for three years and I'd never know it, but I don't think so."

"Ever see the horse?"

The sheriff shook his head.

Rosy stood up. "Well, sheriff, we got business. If you think of any more questions, you'll run into us around town."

All Rosy's rancor had gone, but there was a quiet and assertive challenge underlying his statement that the sheriff did not miss. He smiled a slow, crinkling smile that made his fat face look amiable and pleasant.

"I reckon I will," he said. "If you could be on eight corners at once where I was passin', I reckon you would. Go ahead. Seems to me you'll do any dang thing you please anyway. So long's you don't let any blood doin' it, help yourself."

Outside, on the street again, Rosy took a deep breath and looked at Dave. "Did you ever get that crawlin' feelin' sittin' around a camp-fire alone at night when you felt like some one was drawin' a bead with a Winchester on your left ear? There's just nothin' you can do about it except wait. But instead of that, you send a couple of quick shots into the brush and find you've scared out a nosey jackrabbit. That's the way that fat sheriff hits me. I reckon I just had to jump him."

"I'm glad you did," Dave said. "It was either that or a gunfight. I reckon he never took such a combin'-out in his life and I'm danged sure he never will again."

"I hope not. Not from me, anyway. I was never so danged scared in my life," Rosy admitted honestly.

They stopped at the corner.

"Take a look around," Dave said. "I'm goin' to parley with old Pearson in the bank here. Drop a few questions about this bushwhacker. Maybe you'll get an idea."

DAVE went into the bank and Rosy sauntered across the street to the Free Throw, and shouldered through the doors. After the hot dusty glare of the street, the saloon was cool and dark. The bar lay to the right, the gambling tables to the left, the door to the dance hall in the rear. He bought a drink at the mahogany bar, scrutinizing mildly the soaped legends on the mirror, the dead-faced bartenders, and the idlers at the bar.

A hum of conversation was loud and steady through a slowly rising fog of tobacco smoke. Only one of the faro tables was playing, and that lackadaisically, Rosy judged, from the thin crowd around it. The gamblers, mostly men from the gold mines, would be in after work. He crossed the big, box-like room to the faro table against the wall and mingled with the watchers.

Martin Quinn was at the box, his movements lazy, almost indifferent. In one of his occasional glances at the crowd, he caught sight of Rosy, called to another gambler who was idling at a beer to take his place and came out from behind the table to join Rosy.

"Howdy, Rand. How's things?" Quinn greeted him, extending his hand.

"Piddlin'. How's yourself?"

"Poco-poco," Quinn answered. "Let's have a drink. That's the only way I keep awake."

They picked an uncrowded spot at the back end of the bar, Rosy ordering Bourbon, Quinn beer.

"Did I see a question breakin' out in your eyes when you looked at me?" Quinn asked, after they had received their drinks.

"You did," Rosy said.

Quinn listened carefully while Rosy told him of the events which had brought them in to Single Shot.

"He gets off the train and somebody slams him?" he said softly to Dave. "Why?"

"Dunno. I don't suppose he's got more'n two hundred dollars to his name. He's got a good ranch, a plenty good spread, but she's spavined. Land mortgaged, no stock, buildin's poor. Other hand, good grass, plenty water and a big range. Now you tell me."

Quinn shrugged. "Describe this bushwhacker again."

"Sandy hair, cut with a drawknife about three years ago, I'd say; three weeks' beard; blue eyes; four inches shorter'n me; square face; missin' a few teeth. He was wearin' waist overalls, dirty blue flannel shirt, black vest. Black Stetson."

"Cut it finer," Quinn said.

Rosy laughed.

"Hell, I can't. I'll pick six men in this room right now that look like him —and yet they don't. Only one thing different, maybe not so different either. Carried matches in his hatband and wore his hat flat-crowned. He had ten fingers, ten toes and not a scar."

"Any clay on his clothes?" Quinn asked.

Rosy looked at him keenly. "Now you mention it, there was. Not much though."

"Look at the books out at the Draw Three then," Quinn said.

"Draw Three?" Rosy asked, his voice quiet, his eyes suddenly stilled.

"Sure. They're working in clay out there. There's men in here from a whole bunch of mines to the south and some to the east, and prospectors too, but you can tell a Draw Three man every time if he hasn't changed work clothes. They're covered with clay to their ears."

"Wonder if the sheriff savvies that?" Rosy inquired mildly.

"He might. If he didn't want you to know though, he'd sure make out like he didn't," Quinn said. He smiled. "Some people will tell you that old-timer is dumb. But I've found out that whatever gets by him has got to fight shy of a long rope. Twenty bucks will get you forty he's got a note out to the Draw Three now checking up on that."

"I believe you," Rosy said, suddenly smiling. He finished his drink. "Have another?"

"No, thanks. I'm due back at the box. Let me know what you find out."

"I'll do that. Much obliged."

Rosy strode out the door, shouldering them aside roughly. So this bushwhacker might be a Draw Three man. Hammond—the lake. It was all pretty plain, too damned plain. He thought of picking Dave up at the bank, then decided he could see the sheriff alone just as well.

When he walked into the sheriff's office the fat man was sitting in the same chair, bent over the same papers.

Rosy slammed the door like a gunshot, and the sheriff wheeled like a cat, his hands at his gun butts.

"Watch it," he growled, "I'm a nervous man."

"I got a tip on that bushwhacker," Rosy said, ignoring the sheriff's words. "He had clay on his clothes, didn't he?"

"Yes," the sheriff said, his eyes small and shrewd, his tone doubtful.

"The Draw Three is workin' in clay, ain't they?" Rosy said. "How about askin' Hammond about that whippoorwill?"

"I was expectin' that," the sheriff said calmly. "I got a man on the way out there now to check up."

Rosy built a smoke carefully, looking at the sheriff. "That give you any ideas?" he asked slowly.

"You think Hammond figgered it might be a little easier to do business with Mary Winters if Dave was out of the way, is that it?" the sheriff asked.

"That's damn near it," Rosy said grimly. "When'll this messenger you sent out be back?"

"In an hour."

Rosy turned and strode to the door, his cigarette unlit.

"Just a minute," the sheriff said. Rosy turned. The sheriff picked a paper up, laid it down, searching for words.

"If I was you—" he began.

"If you was me," Rosy cut in, "you'd just wait and let the law take care of this, wouldn't you? Well, you ain't me. If Hammond thinks there ain't a man out at the D Bar T to argue this out, with guns, fists or words, he's loco. I've heard of the law runnin' hawg-wild in some cow-towns and when it does, it's a pretty good idea to not to leave it to the law."

"Don't you reckon the jasper might have been some one Dave knowed in prison and that had a grudge agin' him?" the sheriff asked gently.

"I know he isn't," Rosy said flatly. "That's the kind of excuse these small town laws start lookin' for."

The sheriff's eyes narrowed a little, but he did not move.

"How do you know it ain't?" he said.

"Because I was Turner's cell-mate."

The sheriff blinked. "*You* was?"

"Uh-huh."

"What for?"

"I run afoul a tough-talkin' law," Rosy said. He turned and started for the door.

"Wait," the sheriff said. He hoisted his bulk out of the chair. "I'm comin' with you."

Rosy did not talk as they walked together down to the corner and turned into the bank. Inside, he saw a partitioned-off room at the front of the bank, a frosted glass door marked "Private" opening on to it behind the wire wicket which ran the whole length of the bank.

DAVE soon came out with Pearson and they walked over to Rosy. The sheriff hung back, as if he were not with Rosy.

"Mr. Pearson, this is Rosy Rand, the D Bar T's new foreman."

Rosy slid a surprised glance at Dave, then looked at Pearson. The immaculate clothes of the banker covered a spare, thin body, and in shaking hands Rosy noticed the banker's hands were thin, almost boneless, and a dead white. Sparse graying hair covered an intellectual head, the eyes were sharp, probing, black and deepset. Rosy guessed at once he was a New Englander and the clipped speech of the banker soon verified it.

"Rand," he said, bowing a little stiffly, "A pleasure." He regarded the two younger men with warmth. "So you're the young man who prevented the train robbery last night?" he asked Rosy.

Rosy flushed uncomfortably.

"I reckon I just walked into it," he drawled. "I couldn't very well back out without shootin'."

Pearson nodded agreeably.

"Well, I had the payroll money for three mines coming in on that train. Of course, they were insured, but then,"—

he shrugged and smiled meagerly—"it saved a very costly delay. As soon as I heard about it this morning, I wrote the insurance company. I think there will be a reward for you, young man."

Rosy started to protest, but Pearson held up his hand.

"I know. But insurance companies like to reward men just as much for the prevention of the crime as for its cure." He laughed thinly at his own joke. Turning to Dave again, he said: "Well, Davy. Things may brighten up. At any rate, I wish you both luck. Come in and see me whenever you're in town."

Pearson turned and left them and before Rosy could speak, the sheriff was beside him.

"That bushwhacker likely come from the Draw Three," Rosy told Dave bluntly.

"Maybe," the sheriff said.

Dave looked at Rosy. The sheriff saw the jaw muscles in Dave's face bulge a little.

"From the Draw Three," Dave said quietly.

"Maybe," the sheriff repeated.

"The sheriff thought so enough to send a man out to ask," Rosy said. "The clay on his clothes gave him away. The Draw Three is the only mine working now in clay."

"So that cheap—" Dave began, then clipped off his speech, turned on his heel and strode to the door.

"Where you goin'?" the sheriff asked.

"Git a horse if you're comin'," Rosy told him.

The sheriff had a horse at the hitchrack and they mounted and headed out for the Draw Three, all of them sober and quiet.

"Seems to me you're doin' a lot of guessin'," the sheriff said, when they had gone a mile.

Dave looked at him bleakly.

"And it seems to me you got a damn thick skull if you can't see through that. Hammond is the only jasper in this country that would want to see me dead. The man he sends to do it for him gives it away that he's been workin' in Hammond's mine. I wouldn't call that exactly guessin'." Dave finished bluntly.

"All I got to say is make sure of it before you do anything," the sheriff said mildly. "And when you start, you can count me on Hammond's side."

"Suits me," Dave said bluntly. "I thought that's where you'd be on any deal I figured in. On the other side."

"You don't think Hammond done it?" Rosy said to the sheriff.

"No."

Rosy nodded briefly and they fell silent again. As they were in sight of the mine, a rider swung into the road and headed for them. When he was even with them, he reined up, and the sheriff spoke.

"Well?"

"Name of Freeman. Fired three weeks ago. Hammond could tell by that scar you found under his chin."

Dave looked at Rosy and they both looked at the sheriff, who was sucking his teeth complacently.

"Better come along," he said to the rider, obviously a deputy. Then he turned to Dave. "Go on. We might's well get this over with."

"Got any more John Laws you can scrape up to throw down on us in there?" Rosy asked tauntingly.

The sheriff turned to the deputy.

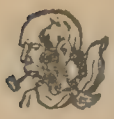
"You go back to the office," he told the man.

The deputy, puzzled, waited a moment until the sheriff repeated his order, then he turned and started slowly back to town.

"I never needed a gang yet to keep me on my feet," the sheriff said. "I ain't aimin' to now."

Silently, they rode up to the mine and dismounted. The main building was tall and angular, one corner of it containing a door and two windows. The sheriff unloosed his guns, and took the lead, Dave and Rosy following.

The door was open and the sheriff strode into the office without knocking. It was a long affair, with a wide desk at the far end, at which Hammond was seated, bent over a ledger. He looked up at their entrance and rose.



DAVE was a little taken aback by Hammond, as was Rosy. The mining man was tall and grizzled, with kindly blue eyes. He had a mane of almost white hair, and a full mustache to match it. His face was seamed, weather-burned, his eyes deep-socketed and widely spaced under bushy white brows. He was dressed in a baggy and unpressed suit of black, and his movements were slow, but certain.

He shook hands with the sheriff and his voice rumbled in this small room. Then he turned to Dave and Rosy and eyed them quizzically.

"These gents have got some questions to ask," the sheriff said, and thereupon introduced them.

They shook hands, the older man warmly, the two younger perfunctorily and without speech. Hammond bid them be seated, but Dave stood up.

"You don't know me, Hammond, I reckon," he began. "Leastways, you didn't seem to recognize the name. I'm Dave Turner, D Bar T."

Hammond nodded quietly, his gaze searching, his face a little stern now. Rosy noted idly that Hammond's ivory-handled guns jutted up conveniently close to his hands which were resting on his thighs.

"Some whippoorwill took a crack at me with a greener last night," Dave said slowly. "Rand killed him. The deputy we met on the road just said he used to work for you. Is that right?"

Hammond's eyes were blue, cold marbles as he stroked his right leg with a big, rough hand.

"That's right," he said quietly. "What about it?"

"That's what I'm wonderin'," Dave said, just as quietly.

Hammond leaned forward a little.

"Yes, he used to work here. He was canned because he tried to run a high-gradin' dicker with my foreman, Shed Martin. What about it?"

"And you want the D Bar T water," Dave said slowly. "You tried to bully my sister into givin' it up and when she wouldn't you threatened to take it to court when you know damned well it's our water and has been for forty years. I'd like to hear you do a little talkin'."

The sheriff spoke up quietly. He had moved off his chair noiselessly and now stood in a corner, his six-guns resting steadily in his palms. "And without any leather-slappin" he said. He looked at Rosy. "That goes for you too, red-head. You've tried to put a saddle on me too many times today."

Rosy settled back a little in his chair, flushing. He had been caught flat-footed. But Dave and Hammond glared at each other, and Hammond slowly rose in his seat.

"Turner," he began, hoarse with suppressed passion. "I've killed men for less than that. And damned sudden."

"Easy," the sheriff purred.

Hammond glared at him blankly, his hands clenching and unclenching, then he swiveled his gaze back to Dave, who was standing with legs spread a little, thumbs hooked in his belt.

"I bought that water," Hammond said slowly, "paid for it in hard cash. I need it to mine with and I'm goin' to take it. The map shows it's on the section I bought, and by Harry Hell I'll use every drop of it if I have to drink it!"

"And I say you won't use a drop of it if I have to build a raft and live on the lake to see that you don't," Dave said.

"Don't make a move," the sheriff said softly.

"We've got the papers for that land," Dave said. "There's a hundred and six-

ty acres taken off a section on our west line and tacked on our east line to include that lake. It's in writin'. Come up and take a look for yourself some time."

Hammond's face had gone from a dead white to a deep red of flushed blood. Rosy watched his every movement with a tense readiness.

"That ain't all you can do," Dave said. "You can go into Phoenix and look in the Land Office files of the year 1893. If they've got 'em back that long, you'll see for yourself. Whoever sold you that land was runnin' a sandy on you, from the ground up. And if you think you can take it with a bunch of killers—"

Hammond, in his rage, forgot he had guns. He lunged at Dave's throat as Dave leaped to meet him, his face contorted with fury. As soon as the sheriff saw that Rosy was trying to part them, he holstered his guns and stepped in. It was a full minute before Dave and Hammond were separated, the sheriff pushing his grunting bulk against Hammond and forcing him against the desk. Rosy held Dave's arms. Hammond's face was almost purple as he struggled with the sheriff. Then he gave in, but his eyes were murderous.

"Turner, I'll kill you like a damned coyote the next time I see you. That's a warnin'. Pack your guns loose and don't talk the next time we meet!"

"If I don't hunt you down first, Hammond," Dave rasped, his voice hoarse with fury. "Next time, I might have a fightin' chance if I kill a couple more of your whippoorwills off."

Hammond lunged forward with a furious string of oaths, only to be held by the sheriff. Dave struggled with Rosy.

"Get him out!" the sheriff ordered.

Dave realized how futile the scene was and he ceased struggling. Rosy loosed his hold.

"Remember," he said quietly to Hammond. And he turned and walked out, Rosy behind him.

As Dave and Rosy rode back to the D Bar T Rosy expressed doubts about Hammond's being guilty of hiring the bushwhacker to shoot at Dave.

"How'd he know you were coming home when you did?" he asked. "Maybe it was the nesters."

"I hope not," said Dave, "because I've got an idea in connection with them. They are squatting on good land. I'll hire some Mexicans to ditch in water and let them raise alfalfa on shares. We could get three crops a year."

"First you have to convince the nesters," said Rosy.

"I'm going to do that right now," replied Dave as they arrived at the nesters' cabins. He had to beat up the biggest of the nesters with his fists before they would listen to reason, but after that they agreed readily to his plan.

It was ten o'clock when they got back to the ranch and Dave's brother-in-law Winters arrived at the same time they did, riding a sweating horse. He explained that he had been doing some prospecting on Old Cartridge.

After making plans for rounding up the cattle and preparing for the alfalfa farming the next day Dave and Rosy went to bed, just as a storm blew up. In the night they were awakened by what they thought at first was thunder, but when it was repeated they realized it was a blast of dynamite. The sound came from the direction of the lake and they set out at once to investigate. They found that an immense hole had been blasted in the edge of the lake and that all the water had drained away—the water without which the D Bar T was worthless.

"Damn Hammond!" cried Dave, and set out at once for Hammond's mine, the Draw Three. Rosy, riding behind, found near the scene of the blasting the butt of a tailor-made cigarette and a

footprint that had the sole of a boot and the heel of a shoe.

In the meantime, in the office of the Draw Three, Hammond was talking things over with his daughter Dorsey and his freighter, Shed Martin.

As they pledged their loyalty to him in his struggle to make the mine pay, all three heard the sound of the blast and shortly afterward an ominous rumble. The water released from the lake was pouring down the canyon in which the mine was situated. Dorsey fled to the hills, Shed Martin rushed to the mine shaft to warn the men who were working there, and Hammond, following him, fell and broke his leg, barely managing to crawl out of the way of the flood. He was found unconscious and taken to the doctor in town, where Dave and Rosy sought him out. Dorsey Hammond was there, and so was the sheriff, and it was due only to his presence that no violence followed the battle of words between the two parties. Not only did the fat law officer prevent gun play, but also he proved to both Dave and Hammond that each was foolish in believing that the other had dynamited the lake—for the gold miner had been as suspicious of Dave as Dave was of him. As the sheriff pointed out, for either one to have set off the explosion would have been sheer financial suicide.

With peace brought about, the two former enemies talked things over, and it was disclosed that a mysterious man named Crowell had been trying to get hold of both the mine and the D Bar T ranch. Hammond also revealed that the local banker, Pearson, had at one time tried to buy into the mine.

During the discussion Rosy Rand noticed that Hammond smoked a pipe, not tailor-made cigarettes, and that the shoes that stood by his bed could not have made the tracks Rosy had discovered by the lake. So he suggested that he and Dave and the sheriff have another look at the scene of the explosion.

CHAPTER XI

ROSY'S HUNCH

AFTER getting something to eat, Rosy, Dave and the sheriff set out for the lake. Rosy was silent all the way out to the Draw Three. When they arrived there, a crowd had gathered. The shaft had been opened and the seven bodies found, one of them Shed Martin's. Rosy hung back and let the sheriff dismount and look the place over. Dave waited patiently, noting idly that the rain had eased off now.

"I've changed my mind," Rosy said suddenly.

"What about?"

"Do you think you two jaspers can take care of the tracks up there at the lake?"

"Sure. Why?"

"I've got a hunch," Rosy said slowly.

"What?"

"I dunno, but I feel like I ought to play it." Rosy looked at him. "I've got a hunch about Crowell. I think he's either in town or will be in town in pretty short order, and I ain't aimin' to miss him."

Dave thought a moment. "There's no reason why we shouldn't split up. I've got a sort of hunch myself, that I wasn't aimin' to spill. It's this. There's a heap of bad-lands behind Old Cartridge and a trail that goes around on the rock-rim to them. I think those jaspers that did the dynamitin' hit for there. It's a canyon country, not good for much except hiding. I know it pretty well from when I was a kid, and I know where the likely places are. And they're places where a single man works better than two."

Rosy's eyes narrowed. "You aimin' to go alone—without Hank, even?"

"That's it," Dave said.

"Huh-uh," Rosy said. "I'm goin' with you."

"I'm goin' alone."

"Huh-uh."

They looked at each other. "Remember you're the foreman of the D Bar T and you're takin' orders from the boss. That's me," Dave said. "I'm orderin' you to go back to town and play your hunch and let me play mine."

Rosy's face was grave. "Leavin' all jokin' aside, Dave, I don't like it. No matter how good one man is, three or four men can down him. I better go with you."

But Dave was just as serious. "I can do it better alone. I'm goin' to have to move like a cat. I know the country. There won't be any shootin' that I don't do first, because it's a surprise party. If two of us—or even three went in there, we'd pick up trouble and plenty of it. They couldn't help but know we was there. But alone—well, you'd be surprised." He grinned. "And that's my orders. You go back to town."

"What about Hank?"

"I'll send him down to tell Mary the news." He smiled wryly. "I haven't the heart to do it myself."

The sheriff waddled over to them and mounted his horse. He accepted Rosy's news that he was going back to town without surprise.

"Don't look for me until you see me," were Dave's parting words.

They separated, Rosy headed back to town. Another horseman was looking at the crowd around the mine shaft and as Rosy pulled away, he saw the man pull his horse and head for the road toward Single Shot.

They took the road at about the same time and fell in with each other. The stranger was a small man, mounted on a big roan gelding that made him look like a wizened, monkey-faced little jockey. He had great, drooping sandy mustaches that were generously shot with gray.

"Howdy," he greeted Rosy.

His hat-brim was bent up, so that he had the appearance of a man constantly riding into a stiff wind. His seamed face was stubbled with a week's growth of beard, so that its blurred, whimsical lines brought out by contrast the black, deepset eyes. Rosy felt the man's eyes coldly appraising him.

"Dave Turner's new boss, ain't you?"

Rosy nodded, wondering how the man knew.

"I'm Laredo Jackson, Boardman's foreman. We're neighbors." They shook hands. Jackson scowled. "That's a coyote's trick. I'd rather shoot a man in the back. Who done it?"

"You might 's well make a guess," Rosy said carefully. "Yours is as good as the next one."

"My guess ain't fit to speak," Jackson answered, looking keenly at Rosy.

Rosy looked at him, secret amusement in his eyes. Here was probably some crank of an old cowpoke that had a pet solution for every crime. "Whisper it, then," Rosy said.

The older man ignored this with dignity. "Mary don't know about this yet, does she?"

"Sheriff's ridin' up that way tonight," Rosy said.

Jackson looked at him. "Hank? Hell, he'll fergit to tell her." A pause. "That makes the D Bar T just about a two-man outfit, don't it?" He cursed savagely and long, Rosy's mild gaze upon him. "There's such a thing as havin' neighbors," the little man said. "Old man Boardman and Dave Turner's old man come in this country when it took a six days' ride to get tobacco. They split the bench just above Soledad between 'em and never put in a foot of wire. Now, by God, I reckon Dave'll start tradin' Boardman land for water-holes and crossin' his breed with camels."

"I reckon," Rosy said. That was a pretty accurate summing-up of what would happen to the Turner spread.

They rode on in silence, Jackson with his leg crooked over the saddle-horn. If

he looked like a monkey, Rosy thought, he acted more like one. He was as restless as one, certainly. He seemed to use his saddle for a bed, a table, a sofa and a rocking chair, squirming incessantly; but his horse, evidently used to it, did not even turn its head. Rosy had an idea that Jackson wanted to tell him something, but was holding back for some reason. As they approached town, Rosy decided to try and pry it out of him.

"You said back there a ways you had a guess as to what's behind all this. Mind tellin' me? I'm about as interested in this as you are."

"Mind tellin' you? Hell, yes, I mind tellin' you," Jackson said bluntly. "You won't be here very long before you begin guessin' the same thing. I'm one of these *hombres* that's careful with his guesses." His smile took the bluntness off his speech, but it did not satisfy Rosy's curiosity.

When they reached the Mile High, Jackson reined up. "Have a drink?"

Rosy shook his head. It was near dusk and he had several things to do before the night was over. "I've got some business. Later, if I see you around."

"Sure. I'm gittin' drunk. You'll see me all right, but if I can't see you and I don't remember it, Boardman wanted me to ask Turner for the loan of a man day after tomorrow."

"He's out—" Rosy checked himself. "Sure. I'll tell him."

He thought he saw a smile start on the smaller man's face, then disappear. Jackson nodded and swung off his horse. Rosy watched him dismount, stretch and swagger into the Mile High. Rosy urged his horse on thoughtfully. What did Jackson guess? He swung down before the Free Throw and debated between a drink and supper. He hadn't seen Quinn for a while. Maybe the gambler would have supper with him.

As he shouldered into the Free Throw, he wondered if it would be wise to tell Quinn the developments. The gambler had a level head and didn't let much get past him. The gambling was slack, but there was a small crowd around Quinn's table. He saw Rosy and motioned him over.

"Get a drink. I'll eat with you later."

Rosy sauntered over to the bar and ordered a whiskey, moving off by himself so that nobody would interrupt him. He wanted to think about things. For some reason, he had a feeling that Crowell was in town or close around. Too much in the man's scheme depended on time. He'd have to get Hammond's mine and the D Bar T before the anger of the two parties had had time to cool down. Had he really gone out on the train? What was there to prove it? Merely his word. Would the agent know? Probably not.

Rosy looked up and found a man staring at him. The look was fleeting, and Rosy looked at the man idly. He was standing at the far end of the bar, a squat man with curious, dead-looking eyes. Rosy couldn't remember having seen the man before, and he supposed it was just idle curiosity in the man that made him stare that way.

Quinn strolled over to the bar and they left the Free Throw together. They walked down five doors to the U-eata cafe, took stools, ordered beefsteak, fried eggs, fried potatoes, pie and coffee from the Chinaman, then rolled cigarettes. Quinn was the first to speak.

"This about cleans you two, doesn't it?"

Rosy nodded. "That's an understatement."

Quinn was quiet a moment. "Who was it meant for? You or Hammond?"

"Both," Rosy said. He suddenly decided he would tell Quinn. The gambler toyed with his cigarette, listening to Rosy's story. When Rosy was finished, he threw his cigarette on the floor and grunted.

"Can Winters afford to lose a thousand dollars at poker?" he asked irrelevantly. Rosy looked quickly at him, wondering what he was driving at. Rosy thought a moment before answering, thought of the D Bar T and the shape it was in, of Mary cooking for the hands, of the few scattered cattle on the range, of Winter's never working and simply living off what could be made at the ranch.

"No," he answered.

Quinn drew an envelope from his pocket and handed it to Rosy, who could feel the limpness of well-worn bills. Rosy handed it back to him, swearing under his breath.

"Keep it," Quinn said.

Rosy looked at him. "Hell no. It's yours. If Winters can't take care of himself, he shouldn't gamble."

"Give it to Dave."

"He won't take it."

Quinn laughed quietly. "Be sensible, man. That money wasn't honestly come by."

"You mean you used a cold deck?" Rosy asked slowly.

Quinn nodded. "I figured he couldn't afford to lose it. You see I'd heard about his wife."

"What about her?" Rosy asked carefully.

"Fine girl. Too fine for him."

Rosy didn't comment.

"I used marked cards," Quinn went on casually. "I figured I'd clean him and then talk to you. If he could afford it, all right. I'd let him win it back and then play him on the level. If he couldn't, it went back to his wife." He looked at Rosy with amusement in his fine, unwavering eyes. "It's better than lettin' him lose it at the other saloon, isn't it?"

"I reckon," Rosy said.

"Ever since I got in town two weeks ago," Quinn continued, "Winters has been ridin' me. I reckon he thought I was a tin-horn." He laughed. "He's wasted a lot of money findin' out I wasn't."

"What if he savvies it?" Rosy asked.

Quinn laughed again. "He won't. He might suspect, but he won't catch me."

The Chinaman brought them their food and they received it silently. When he was gone, Rosy said: "How'll you get it back to Dave? He won't take it."

"Shouldn't he know?" Quinn asked.

"I reckon. Not from me and not from you, though," Rosy said.

Quinn frowned in thought. He drew a clean slip of paper from his pocket and wrote on it. Finished, he handed it to Rosy, who read:

"Dick Turner staked me once when I didn't have a dime. It's taken twenty-five years to pay it back. Hear it is. I can't give my name, because I'm hiding, but the munny's clean. Good luck.

a friend."

Quinn took the paper, slipped it in the envelope with the money and then addressed the envelope to Mrs. Ted Winters.

"They can't question that," Quinn said.

Rosy nodded agreement. "When did Winters lose it?"

"Last night, early. He came in late in the afternoon and wouldn't play with the house men. I'm dealin' faro, but when things are slack I can sit in on a poker game. He waited for me."

"Early last night, you say?" Rosy asked, as casually as he could. He felt his muscles stiffen, but he could not control them. "What time did he leave?"

"Eight-thirty or so."

Rosy took a slow, deep drink of coffee, fighting the slow horror that he felt. "Sure about that time?" he asked, when he was finished.

"Uh-huh. Why?" Quinn looked at him.

"Nothin'."

"You mean he might've passed the lake on his way home and there might have been men workin' there then?"

"He rode in from Soledad," Rosy lied. "I reckon he rode home around Coahuila Butte."

"Sure," Quinn said. Rosy didn't know what had made him lie to Quinn—perhaps a deep urge to protect Dave and Mary. For it was a lie. By way of Coahuila Butte and Soledad, Winters, leaving at eight-thirty could not have made the spread by the time he did, not even lathering his horse like he did. Rosy wasn't sure what way he'd come home, but he was sure it wasn't by Soledad. And the thought made him a little sick. There was only one other way, and that was by the lake. Well, maybe the men hadn't started to work until ten o'clock or so. That was it. They had seen Winters in town, maybe, and knew he would be riding past the lake, so they waited until he had ridden home before they laid the dynamite.

The door to the restaurant swung open and two men entered, one the man whom Rosy had caught staring at him in the Free Throw.

"Know that *hombre* with the dead eye, the fat one that looks like his pants was comin' off?" Rosy asked Quinn. The gambler waited a few minutes before he looked.

"Don't know him. Does he look familiar to you?"

"Huh-uh, but he looks like he knows me."

Quinn had to be back at the faro table at seven-thirty, so Rosy left him and walked up the street to the hotel which was three doors past the Mile High. He engaged a room, went upstairs and washed. Winters kept forcing himself into his mind. If Winters could lose a thousand at poker, where was he getting the money? He couldn't get it from Mary's share of the ranch. Rosy doubted if Mary knew anything about it. And Winters didn't have a job. Had he saved money? Did he get it from the East? "It ain't a bit of business of mine," Rosy thought, "but yet it is in a way." He decided to look up Laredo Jackson and pump him. Maybe Laredo's air of mystery would vanish as soon as he had a few drinks under his belt.

He left the room. As he was going down the stairs he met the same strange still-eyed man that had come in the restaurant. The man nodded as men do who see a stranger so many times a day that they become almost acquainted.

Rosy nodded briefly in answer. Was this jasper following him? After all, there were only two restaurants in town and this man would doubtless pick the one nearest the Free Throw, just as he had done. And there was only one hotel in town, so if the man wanted to stop in town all night, he would almost have to choose this one. He dismissed it with a shrug. He was getting spooky. After all, why be concerned with a stranger when the important thing was finding if Crowell was in town? And that gave him an idea.

Downstairs, he inquired of the clerk: "Any one by the name of Crowell registered here?"

"A. J. Crowell? No, he left this mornin'," the clerk said. He was an old man, and seemed eager for conversation.

"You know him, do you?" Rosy asked.

"Never forget a face," the clerk said.

"You've been on duty all day?" Rosy asked. "I mean, he couldn't have come in and registered under another name?"

"No sir. I been here every second since he checked out."

"Thanks."

OUTSIDE, he decided to look in the Mile High to see if Jackson was in a talkative mood.

Once through the swinging doors, the rank smell of alcohol and cheap tobacco struck him in the face like a thick, miasmic fog. Compared to the Mile High, the Free Throw was an aristocrat among saloons. The Mile High was large, but lacked the dance hall of the Free Throw. A glance around told Rosy that here

was where the hard-cases of the town and surrounding country hung out. In one glance, he took in the faro and monte tables attended by sleek and soiled Mexicans; the two battered pool tables at the rear; the poker tables along the wall and finally the bar. He grinned. Planted smack in dead center of the bar was Laredo Jackson, five feet of elbow room on each side of him. The bartenders were eyeing him with silent disapproval.

Laredo was facing the bar and mirror and saw Rosy's reflection in it as the younger man joined him.

"Two whiskies," he said to the bartender without turning his head. Then to Rosy: "How's things, Red?"

"Good." Rosy saw the customers watching them. "Don't you like company or don't they like you?" he asked.

Laredo turned and faced the room, hoisting his elbows on the bar. He was so short it gave him the appearance of a hunchback.

"I got throwed out of this stinkin' pothole five years ago," he announced loudly. "I git drunk once a week here hopin' somebody'll try it agin'." He spat noisily and surveyed the room belligerently. "Y'see?" he said, turning back to his drink. The bartenders looked at each other and shrugged.

Rosy decided it was useless to try and talk with him. The little foreman was well on his way to being drunk now. Out of courtesy Rosy bought a round, examining the room behind him in the bar mirror. As he was watching, he saw the swinging door open in and the same man Rosy had seen watching him in the Free Throw, the restaurant, and the hotel came in. The man cast a hurried glance around the room, saw Rosy and sauntered back to the faro table. Rosy was sure now that he was being followed.

He leaned over to Laredo. "Know that jasper that just came in? Fat, stocky, with them cedar-handled guns. Got dead eyes in his face."

Very slowly, Laredo set down his glass and looked up at him. "Why might you be wantin' to know?"

"I think he's followin' me."

Laredo turned, and with difficulty singled out the man. Then he turned and grinned. "Sure I know him," he said loudly. "He's an understrapper for a coyote named Sayres."

"Easy," Rosy warned in a low voice. "Some of these hard-cases have got ears."

"Hell," Laredo said. "They know it too. That *hombre* over there, I dunno his name, but you can bet he's a primmer donner with a runnin' iron. His boss owns part of the herd of nigh every man in this room."

The talk at the bar dribbled off into silence, and the customers stared at the two.

"Wally Sayres, this jasper's boss—" Laredo began loudly.

"Let's go over to the Free Throw," Rosy said easily. The room was almost silent, and all eyes were turned on the two men.

"Jerry Boardman made Wally Sayres a present of fifty head of Three B steers last year," Laredo continued, his voice booming through the room. "They call it makin' a present in this country when you turn your back."

It was out. Rosy half turned toward the room, watching the faro table out of the corner of his eye. He saw the stocky man leave the table and come walking slowly toward the bar. The man stopped some ten feet from the bar, feet planted solidly.

"What was you sayin' about Sayres?" the man drawled quietly.

Laredo spat precisely and had trouble focusing his eyes on the man. "What was I sayin' about Sayres?" he repeated. "Why, nothin' much, 'cept he's the forkedest jasper west, east, north, south or in the middle of the Rio Grande."

Rosy swiftly calculated the lights.

His gaze swiveled back to the man standing before them.

"And that ain't all," Laredo continued, his elbows coming slowly from the bar. "He feeds and runs the damnedest pack of buzzards that ever forked a bronc."

The man was leaning forward a little, and Rosy could see his features bloated with anger.

"Take it easy," Rosy told the man calmly. "Jackson's drunk." He felt his spine crawling, crawling.

"You been flappin' that chin of yours once too often, Jackson," the man drawled. "If you ain't yellow-bellied, back it up! Fill your hand!"

Rosy's hands blurred to his guns which clicked swiftly as they settled, cocked, rock-steady, pointing at the man's belly.

"Better let it die," Rosy said silkily. The man's thick hands were wrapped around his gun butts, where they froze. Rosy stepped in front of Laredo, who had barely realized what had passed. This was no wise play, he thought swiftly. There were men behind them, besides the bartenders. The stocky man's hands did not relax off his guns. He was watching for a break.

Rosy's guns up-tilted a little and spoke in three lances of flame. The lights diminished in three sudden gradations, the last shot bringing darkness. Rosy pushed Laredo from him, then moved quickly after the little foreman. As Rosy expected, the insulted outlaw had drawn his guns and was shooting in the dark, his slugs slapping into the bar.

Rosy reached for Laredo's feet and lifted, heaving the slight body over the bar, then vaulted over himself, dropping behind it on his hands and knees. Some one else was shooting now from across the room and Rosy heard the first tinkle of glass which denoted a broken mirror. He felt for Laredo and discovered him in a heap, passed out. Gun in

his right hand, Laredo's collar in left, he moved toward the back of the building. He bumped into some one and promptly slugged out with his gun. "One bartender down," he muttered. There was a blind rush for the doors, shouts, muttered curses, more shots. Feeling his way along the wall, he swung Laredo to his shoulder, and made his way cautiously until he felt the door handle. He shoved the door open and fell forward. A whine of slugs sang over his head. He rolled out of range, dragging Laredo, and lunged to his feet.

Across the street fronting squarely on the alley was the sheriff's office. Rosy made for it, taking the alley between the office and the bank. In the lean-to, which had no door, he deposited Laredo on the floor and tried the door to the back room. It was locked. He shouldered against it, broke the lock and carried Laredo into the room. He remembered the room contained a cot and without striking a match he found it. Laredo was sleeping peacefully as Rosy laid him on the cot. He struck a match, shielded its flare and examined Laredo. There were no wounds and he rose, laughing quietly, and left the building, closing the door carefully behind him.

He drew a deep breath. Things were shaping up. He knew now that the understrapper in the saloon had been following him, and that the fight with Laredo had merely been a pretense to shoot it out with him, Rosy. The man had wanted to kill him. Why? Who was Sayres? Laredo had told so little about him that Rosy was curious.

He built a cigarette slowly, leaning against the office wall in the alley. One thing was certain, now. He had a clue to work on. And it seemed to point to Sayres. He determined to do some prowling and find out some things. The commotion in the Mile High was dying out now and through the high side windows Rosy could see that the lamps were being lighted. That fat jasper would have cleared out by now. He'd pick him up later. First, he wanted to prowl and find out a little about Crowell—and Sayres. As he started to cross to the shelter of the dark alley behind the Mile High, he thought of something.

He fished around for a stub of a pencil in his pocket, tore the back off a soiled envelope and wrote: "Quinn: If I was you, I'd change my room tonight. Rand." Maybe it was unnecessary, but this fat understrapper of Sayres had seen him talking to Quinn, and Rosy didn't want the gambler pulled into the trouble.

At the bank corner, he flagged a young Mexican, gave him a dollar and told him to deliver the note to Quinn.

Then Rosy ducked back into the alley and headed for the north end of town where the livery stable was located.

He was taking a chance, he knew, but men who worked around horses and who ran livery stables were usually good men—if they would talk. And Rosy intended to hear some talk.

The office of the livery stable was lighted and Rosy strolled in. An old man was sitting at a desk, poring over a feed catalog. Rosy sized him up in a glance. The man had good eyes, a kind, homely face, and was slow in movement as he looked up at Rosy while still leafing the pages.

"Oh," Rosy said. "The other feller ain't here?" He looked around the bare room, at the cold stove and two rough chairs.

"The night man? Louie? No. I give him the night off. Anything I can do for you?"

Rosy pretended disappointment. "No, I reckon not. I hoped I'd git him in. You see, he sort of thought he had a job lined up for me. I'm new here," he said, by way of explanation.

"That so?" the old man said. "Set down." Rosy sat. "Where did Louie think he could git you a job? Here?"

The old man was smiling now, and Rosy smiled back.

"No. He wasn't sure, but he thought a feller by the name of Sayres that's got a spread somewhere near here could use me."

Rosy saw the eyes change and the old man's jaw clamped shut. "Louie said that?" the old man asked. "Huh-uh. You must have talked to somebody else."

"Might be," Rosy said carelessly. "He was a sort of fat feller, with dead eyes and packed a couple of cedar handled guns."

The old man laughed, and Rosy thought he detected a note of relief in his voice. "That wasn't Louie. Louie's tall and thin as a rail." The old man looked at him. "I think I know who you talked to, though. He works for Sayres himself. Hangs around here some."

"That so?" Rosy said, looking up. "Think he could get me a job?" The old man looked at him a long time before he answered. "You ain't a wild one, are you?"

"Not me," Rosy said. "Why?"

"That's the only kind Sayres hires. I don't reckon you'd like the job."

"What's the matter with him?" Rosy said bluntly. "Work's work."

"Not if it's—well, not if you have to do things that it's pretty awkward answerin' for," the old man said.

Rosy looked keenly at him. "Meanin' what? I'm a stranger here and I'd be much obliged for a straight steer."

"Meanin' rustlin', killin's, drygulchin', workin' with men that ain't ever earned a honest penny in their lives. Stealin' mebbe. Mebbe holdin' up banks."

"So," Rosy said. He smiled slowly. "If I tolled in with Sayres, I might see some of that, huh?"

"I never said you would," the old man said, and he smiled. They understood each other.

"Where does this Sayres hang out at?"

"Used to be up in them badlands behind Old Cartridge, but they tell me he's pulled out of there. You got to ride up the valley a ways, then turn east into them mountains. They say you can git acrost them, but I'm danged if I know how. Sayres does. Leastways, people think that's where he hangs out."

"Much obliged, old-timer," Rosy said. "I reckon I'll look somewhere else."

HE swung out the door into the night. That helped. Could it be Sayres was the man who had done the dynamiting? It fitted in. Crowell could be behind Sayres, who had orders to blow out the lake, so Crowell could step in and buy the D Bar T and the Draw Three for a song.

He didn't know, but he was going to find out. He heard a train whistle far off and he quickened his pace toward town, using the alleys again. He headed straight for the station. The train was just a little ahead of him and was panting in the station as Rosy approached. Hoagy Henshaw was in conversation with the agent in the middle of the platform. Rosy waited until Hoagy was free then beckoned him out of earshot of the idlers. Hoagy greeted him with a slow smile.

"What can I do for you, Rand?"

"Dunno," Rosy said. "You on the morning run out of here?"

"Sure. Every other morning. Why?"

"This morning?"

"Sure."

"Was there a little short jasper got on here this morning? Dark, in black clothes, city clothes. Had black eyes, and pretty mouthy in his talk."

Hoagy shook his head slowly. "Can't remember him."

"Think," Rosy said. "When he looked at you, he always looked at your tie or your coll—"

Hoagy snapped his fingers. "Hell, yes, I remember him. I never did find out where he got off. I never seen him and I didn't get his ticket."

"Then he got off?" Rosy said eagerly. "Where?"

"Before Walpais, the first town east."

"That's all I wanted to know. Much obliged." And before Hoagy could blink, Rosy was gone into the night.

He jogged up the alley, turned at the bank, walked over to the Free Throw and got his horse. As he swung past the hotel, his bay was at full gallop.

"And me loafin' in town the whole damn day," he raged. "He's either seen Mary by now, or he's goin' to tomorrow mornin', I don't know which."

CHAPTER XII

BOOT MARKS

ROSY reached the ranch well after one o'clock. The house was dark, still, and he wondered if Hank Lowe had stayed all night. If so, then it was encouraging, for if Crowell had already been to see Mary about buying the place, the sheriff would have got him. And if he'd got him, then he would have brought him into town. And Rosy had not met him on the road, so the chances were that the sheriff was staying all night, and that Crowell had not appeared yet.

Rosy let down the corral bars, unhooked his hull and slung it off his bay, whistling in a minor key the while. He heard a sharp object strike the barn and he stopped.

"That damn cinch buckle," he groaned softly. "If I don't find it tonight, I never will." He was impatient to get in the house and talk to Mary and the sheriff, but his caution kept him there.

He slung the saddle over the corral bars, after a glance at the clear sky for a night rain, then strode over to the barn and pulled a handful of matches from his pocket. Squatting, he struck a match and started to look for the buckle.

He had looked a half minute perhaps, when a low cry escaped him.

There, in the soft dirt of the corral, was the same bootprint that he had seen at the lake!

He stared unbelieving, his mind racing. The match burned him and died, and he struck another. This time he measured the track, but he knew it was the same. Whose could it be? His? No. Mary's or Dave's? No. The sheriff's? Hardly. Winters? . . . Damn, yes! Now he remembered, Winters wore army boots, or eastern riding boots.

Rosy squatted against the barn, his heart numb. It was Winters, all right. Whether he wanted to believe it or not, Winters knew about the lake being dynamited. This, together with Quinn's evidence, was damning. And the cigarette butt. Of course, Winters smoked tailor-mades. Why hadn't he thought of it! Rosy rubbed a hand over his eyes and groaned softly. Good God, what if Dave knew it—or Mary? What if they found out, and sooner or later they would? Rosy felt sick and he hunched against the barn, miserable. He sat that way for fifteen minutes before he realized that he would have to pull himself together.

He tried to reason it out. Winters knew about the lake being dynamited, had perhaps talked to Sayres—if Sayres had done the dynamiting—that night. Maybe he knew why Crowell wanted to buy the place. Maybe he was in with Crowell. Rosy refused to believe it, but at the same time he felt it was true, knew it was true.

He strolled over the corral bars and leaned on them. Why not chuck it, saddle up and light out? What business was it of his? A sudden shame swept over him as he thought of it. No. He and Dave were riding this out together. Dave and Mary would have to know

about Winters in the end—but Rosy could make it as easy for them as possible. He didn't know how, but he would.

And the first thing to do was to keep it from them until it had to be spilled, until he could simply take Winters in and have him tell his own story.

Rosy looked at the house. He wondered how much Winters knew. How much had the sheriff told Mary and Winters about the conversation at Hammond's and what had been learned about Crowell? Very little, Rosy guessed, for the sheriff was as close-mouthed as they came. Winters, then, wouldn't know that they suspected Crowell. And if Winters was in with Crowell, and Crowell hadn't been to see Mary yet, then Winters would be sure to get the sheriff out of the house before Crowell came in the morning. And it was Rosy's duty to hear what Crowell had to say, and see if Winters was in with him. He turned his horse out of the corral and slapped him on the rump. Without seeing the horse, Winters wouldn't know he was here.

Sick at heart, he turned into the stable, crawled up into the loft to wait for dawn.

Rosy sat erect with a lunge. He had been asleep and it was already daylight. Was he too late? No, there was the sheriff's voice below, and Winter's genial laugh. He crawled softly through the hay until he found a crack in the boards and could look down into the corral. They were saddling up.

"You like a early start, don't you?" the sheriff drawled amiably.

"Sure. I'm up every morning before the rest of them are," Winters said.

"Well, if I didn't have to be at work, I'd like to ride down to Soledad with you and yarn with old Pablo."

"It's tough being a busy man," Winters said with a laugh.

"Busy but useless," the sheriff said.

Rosy saw Winters let down the corral gate, and both men led their horses through.

"Say," the sheriff said. "I might ride down with you at that. It's early yet."

"I've got to ride over and tell those nesters about the lake," Winters said. "Maybe it'll crowd you."

"Yeah. Guess I better not at that. It'll put me in town pretty late. Well, so long."

"So long."

Both men mounted, the sheriff heading up the long slope to the notch, Winters to the south toward Soledad.

Winters had done a smooth job of getting the sheriff out of the way, Rosy thought bitterly. He'd risen three hours earlier than usual, then had kept the sheriff from riding with him to Soledad by that excuse that the nesters had to be informed. With a sinking heart, Rosy admitted that it looked as if Winters was expecting Crowell, and had gone down to meet him.

He climbed down into a stall and sat on a feedbox. If he had hoped the morning would clear things for him, he was wrong. It was still bewildering. And through all of Rosy's thoughts about Winters ran the refrain: "Why? Why is he doin' it?" But there was no answer.

He built a cigarette to steady his nerves before he saw Mary. What was he going to tell her? Just that he thought a man was going to come and try to buy the ranch from her, and that she shouldn't sell.

He gave himself another five minutes, then hitched up his belt and walked toward the house, his face bland, his heart filled with a damning misery.

Inside, Mary looked up from the table. She had been sitting staring out the window.

"Hullo, Rosy." She forced a weak smile. "Where's Dave?"

"He stayed in town. He had some business," Rosy said evasively.

"I didn't hear you come in."

"I'm part Injun," Rosy said and grinned. She smiled back.

"Reckon you got any cold hotcakes I can have?" Rosy asked. He cursed himself for not brushing the hay off his clothes better. She would be able to tell he had slept in the loft.

"Sure. And the coffee's hot." She rose and went to the stove, while Rosy washed out in the lean-to. When he returned, freshened by the cold water, and minus some of the hay wisps, his face was inscrutable.

Suddenly, Mary whirled, her chin up defiantly, but her eyes lustreless and dull.

"Rosy."

He looked up from the table where he had been tracing the pattern of the oilcloth.

"What will we do, Rosy? What's it all about?" she cried. She was breathing deeply and Rosy wondered if she would cry. But he misjudged her.

"About what?"

"You too!" Mary said, stamping her foot. "Why don't you tell me? Isn't it half my spread? Are you afraid I can't bear to hear the truth? Is that it? The sheriff just hummed and hawed around and didn't say a word. It was awkward enough to have him here anyway, after he wouldn't let Dave come into town. But to have him—oh, Rosy. Tell me!"

"What did Hank tell you?" Rosy asked.

"Nothing! Except that the lake had been blown out on top of Hammond's mine, and both it and our spread are ruined. Did Hammond do it, Rosy? Who did? Why? Don't you know?"

Rosy shook his head slowly, preparing his lie. "It's no wonder Hank didn't tell you any more. He couldn't. None of us can. We don't know who did it. But one thing we're sure of—Hammond didn't.

"Is that the truth?"

"Naked as a brandin' iron," Rosy said, and grinned. Mary sighed and turned to the stove.

That was over, but the worst was to come, Rosy thought. He put it off until fresh hotcakes were before him and he had put away a plateful.

"Some jasper's comin' to try and buy the ranch this mornin'," he announced and immediately stuffed hotcakes in his mouth.

"Who?"

"Dunno," he lied coolly. "Just heard. Dave heard about it too. He says not to sell just in case he wasn't home when this jasper got here."

Mary looked at him strangely. "What makes him think I would sell my half?"

"I don't think he did. He just wanted to be sure." Rosy went on eating, looking attentively at his plate.

"You're a poor liar, Rosy," Mary said quietly.

Rosy looked up at her and felt the blood creep into his face.

"I know it," he said just as quietly.

"Where's Dave?"

"I'm not lyin' now. He's ridin' and I'm not sure where." He smiled at her. "And if I did, I wouldn't tell you."

Mary's laugh was spontaneous and it warmed Rosy to hear it. "You're a funny man, Rosy—but a nice one."

"You'll think I'm a lot funnier when you hear this next," Rosy said doggedly.

"What?"

"I want you to hide me so I can hear what this jasper says that wants to buy the ranch. I got to." His serious tone impressed Mary, for she nodded mutely.

"It's none of my business, understand," Rosy said, knowing that he was blushing, but persisting anyway; "but I've got to hear him."

"Can you tell me why, Rosy?" she asked him.

Rosy shook his head and looked away.

"I wish—"

"Wait!" Rosy commanded, holding up his hand. They were quiet. The steady

beat of hoofs came to them and Mary ran to the window.

"Why it's Ted—and a stranger. Is that the man, Rosy?"

"I reckon," Rosy said shortly. "Where can I hide? And you better get these dishes cleared away."

Mary ran to the front room, Rosy following her. He picked the low davenport, over which a huge navajo rug was thrown, for his hiding place.

Mary held it up while he crawled under. As he was on his knees he looked up at her. "Remember. Don't sign anything. And believe me, I'm tryin' to help you."

Mary nodded, and Rosy crawled under the davenport. He realized that Mary knew he was keeping things from her, but it couldn't be helped. He had been afraid to mention that the man coming to buy the ranch was named Crowell. He wanted Mary's surprise at the name to be genuine, so as to impress Crowell with the fact that none of them suspected him. He placed his guns at his head and lay sprawled on his stomach, listening.

He heard the two men enter the kitchen, the sound of voices, then Mary saying distinctly: "Come into the front room, Mr. Crowell."

Rosy heard them enter the room and take chairs around the fireplace, which was cold now. Crowell offered Winters a cigar, which he accepted with thanks, and lighted. Rosy resisted the impulse to lift the blanket and have a look at Crowell.

Winters spoke now, his voice thick with cigar smoke. "I met Mr. Crowell on the way to Soledad, darling, and he asked me to come back with him. I think he's going to give us some money, so listen carefully."

All of them laughed.

"Mrs. Winters," Crowell began, and Rosy noticed his voice was confident and smooth, "perhaps you didn't remember my name when we were introduced. I'm the Crowell that's written you about selling the ranch."

Rosy heard Mary's little gasp of surprise. "But I thought—I—I thought those letters were written by Hammond, and just signed 'Crowell.'"

"Hammond?" Crowell asked vaguely.

"Yes. He owns the Draw Three mine in Single Shot." And Mary explained their quarrel over the lake and the suspicion that Hammond was trying to buy the ranch under the name of Crowell. "Frankly, I was sure it was Hammond because no one ever came to inquire in person."

Crowell laughed genially. "Quite right. One for you. I was merely feeling you out because this ranching syndicate I work for wasn't quite sure it wanted the property. We are now, however."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Crowell," Mary said. "One letter from me would have settled this for good and all. I'm afraid you've wasted your time. I don't want to sell."

"That's strange," Crowell said. "When I talked with your brother last night, he was sure that you'd want to sell, too."

"Too?" Mary said, a little catch in her voice.

Rosy heard some papers rustle. "Yes. In my hotel room last night when he signed this deed, he told me he thought you'd be willing to let your half go for a reasonable price, now that the water's gone."

THE paper rustled again, there was quiet for a second, and Rosy heard Mary gasp. "But—it's signed. Signed by Dave!" she cried.

"Is there anything the matter?" Crowell asked politely.

"No. I'm sorry," Mary said. "It—it was just such a surprise. I didn't know he intended to sell out. When did you see him, Mr. Crowell?"

"I can tell you exactly," Crowell said. "He had to run to catch the train."

"Train? You—you mean he's left town?"

"I presume so."

Rosy raged silently. Where had Crowell got Dave's signature? A forgery? And now Mary would think that Rosy had hesitated to tell her about Dave because he didn't want her to know that Dave had left town—run out on her. He felt his heart thumping wildly as he waited for her answer.

"But—but I don't understand," Mary said weakly.

"It's easily explained, Mrs. Winters," Crowell said. "Your brother realized that the place was worthless to him now. He decided on the spur of the moment to let his half go. He knew I would be out first thing this morning to tell you, so he didn't bother to send word out."

"But why are you buying it if it's so worthless?" Mary asked. Rosy strangled the desire to shout. Mary had got a grip on herself.

"Grass," Crowell said bluntly. "This close to the railroad, there's very little grass to be had. Our syndicate buys stock in old Mexico, fattens it in the States near a railroad, and shoves it into market when the prices are right."

"But the water?"

Crowell laughed easily. "We have money, Mrs. Winters. Building up that wall again with a crew of men is a small matter for us. It takes money, of course, but then we have it."

Maybe, Rosy thought. There's that little matter of the springs blown under that you missed, Mister. But Mary wouldn't be expected to know about that.

"Of course," Crowell was saying, "I don't want you to sell against your will. There's no reason why you should. "But—" and here Rosy imagined him leaning forward, emphasizing his points —"you realize, of course, that when your brother signed away his half, it included the house, barns, implements, horses—everything on the place. We intend to take the house and build it over into a large bunkhouse for forty men. Naturally, if you stayed here, we could only take over half of it, but then it would be rather uncomfortable for you. Then there's the water. If we dammed up the lake again at our own expense, it wouldn't be fair for you to water your stock at our expense." He laughed shortly. "It would be quite uncomfortable for you, Mrs. Winters."

"I know. But I can't believe Dave would do it!" Mary cried suddenly.

"Very sensible, I should say, Mrs. Winters. He realized he didn't have the money to get the place on its legs again —dam the lake and everything, so he did the wise thing and took a good sum of money for it."

"Ted, what do you think?" Mary asked suddenly, her voice pleading.

"It looks like Dave has run out on us, Mary. Without him to run the place, I'd say we might as well give up and sell out to Mr. Crowell." Winters' voice was wistful, regretful, and Rosy could gladly have strangled him.

He heard Mary get out of her chair and walk to the window. When she spoke again, it was as if she was arguing with herself.

"But you'll buy a court fight with the spread, Mr. Crowell. Hammond claims the lake too."

"But who owns it?"

"We do," Mary said.

"And you have the papers to prove it?"

"Yes."

"May I see them?"

Mary hesitated a moment, then said: "Surely."

Rosy knew she was wanting time to digest all this, to try and reason it out before she acted. Getting the paper would give her time. He heard her excuse herself and leave the room. Then he heard some one get up and say in a low voice:

"God, this is shaky! Do you think it's going to work?" It was Crowell speaking.

"Sure. Dave's signature convinced her. Now don't lose your head."

Crowell laughed softly. "I won't. But since Dave and Hammond aren't fighting each other, I don't know how much they suspect. And where's that redhead?"

"He hasn't been around here. We're safe enough," Winters said positively.

"And you couldn't get a thing out of that fat sheriff?"

"No, I couldn't pry a thing out of him."

"Well, there's only one thing to do. I'll register at the hotel today like I'd just come in. Then I'll see Hammond again and try to talk him into selling and then I'm disappearing."

Winters laughed. "You're getting spooky. They don't suspect anything."

"Maybe not. But I'm not chancing it. Every one is doing just what the Boss said they wouldn't. Except Turner. He walked right into Sayres' hand like I told you."

"Did Sayres have a tough time cracking him?"

"Not from what Chinch said when he gave me this paper."

"What does the Boss think?"

"He's satisfied with Sayres' work but he's on my tail to finish this."

"Don't worry. You'll—watch out!"

As Mary came into the room, Crowell was saying to Winters: "—and it can be done without too much expense."

Rosy had been listening until his ears rang. So Winters was in on it! And Sayres had Dave a prisoner! But more than that, *there was a boss behind them!* Even behind Crowell. A thousand questions raced through Rosy's brain. Was Dave alive? What was to prevent them from killing him now that they had his signature? But the one question that Rosy had to answer and couldn't—*Who was the boss?*

Rosy got a grip on his panic by a desperate effort. He heard Mary say to Crowell:

"Here's the land papers."

He heard Crowell take them. Rosy laid his head on arms and shut his eyes, trying to rearrange his plan. He had hoped to be able to step out and capture Crowell and maybe Winters. Now it was useless, because they were only understrappers. There was a bigger man, a nameless, sinister, ruthless brain behind them. If he took Crowell now, Crowell would close his mouth tighter than an Indian's, because Rosy couldn't prove a thing against him. And that meant that the Boss would never be known. No, he couldn't tip his hand now. There was only one thing to do. *Follow Crowell until he led them to the boss!* He had to let Crowell walk out of here, let him go on with his schem-

ing work until he betrayed the whole gang. And more important than all the rest, Dave must be rescued! Immediately, for God knows what that fiend of a Sayres would do to him.

"All in order, Mrs. Winters," Crowell said. "I think we can afford to pay an extra two thousand for that paper. It's fool proof."

Rosy heard Mary sigh. "I—I don't think I'll sell, Mr. Crowell. Not right away, anyway."

Rosy sighed so loudly that he thought he must have been heard.

"Well, I think you'll regret it, Mrs. Winters. But I won't insist. We'll give you exactly what we gave Dave, plus the two thousand of course. Won't you take time to reconsider before you give your refusal?"

"Why—yes," Mary said hesitantly. "How long will the offer be open?"

"Until tonight at train time," Crowell said, and Rosy heard him rise. "I'll be registered at the hotel, at Single Shot, so if you change your mind you'll know where to find me."

"That will be fine," Mary said.

"Good bye, Mrs. Winters," Crowell said. "No. Don't bother to come out with me. I hope to hear from you by tonight. Good bye."

Rosy heard the outside door open and shut. He felt weak with excitement.

"Mary,"—it was Winters speaking pleadingly—"you can't be serious about not wanting to sell now that Dave has run out on us!"

"Let's go in the kitchen, Ted," Mary said quietly.

"Damned if I will!" Winters exploded. "I want to know if you're going to sell. Let's get rid of this ramshackle old place and go east where we belong."

Rosy heard Mary's heels on the floor, headed for the kitchen. Then they stopped abruptly and scraped, as if she had turned around suddenly.

"Look here," Winters said in a cold voice. "Cut out this sentimental nonsense. We'll have a fortune. Dave's out of it—"

"He isn't," Mary said desperately.

"Isn't he?" Winters said sardonically. "Are you doubting Crowell's word?"

"Please let's go to the kitchen," Mary begged.

Rosy was squirming in embarrassment for her.

"Answer me," Winters ordered harshly.

"No," Mary retorted heatedly. "I'm not doubting anybody's word. He's wrong. I know Dave too well to think he'd do a thing like that!"

"Take a fortune instead of a chance to run a bunch of mangy cattle?" Winters asked sarcastically. "You overestimate that jailbird's love for work."

Rosy heard Mary gasp and he fought back the impulse to fling off the davenport and beat Winters to a pulp. "If I do, the whole thing is spoiled," he told himself savagely, regretfully.

"Why not say it?" Winters said. "It's true. He's run off now and left us to share this place of sentiment and misplaced loyalty."

"Let's not talk about it, Ted," Mary said quietly. "After all, I'm the one to decide."

"Are you?" Winters sneered. "You're waiting for that no-good brother to turn up after another eight years and ask his advice."

Mary did not answer.

"You had chances to sell before Dave got here," Winters continued. "You refused. Now, since the place has been made worthless, you still refuse. Why?"

Rosy wondered if she'd break down and tell him. His ears thudded with the angry pumping of his blood.

"You wouldn't understand," Mary said calmly. "It's not sentiment. It's—it's just that I've lived here all my life and love it. If I had to leave it, it would mean half my life was gone."

"A cow-country gal," Winters sneered. "Just a calico sweetheart. All right,"—

his tone was gathering confidence—"you'll either take the offer for the place or look for a new husband. I'm through if I have to stay!"

"I thought that was it, Ted," Mary said quietly.

"Then you won't take it?"

"No."

Rosy heard the sharp slap of flesh on flesh and Mary's startled cry of pain. Then the door slammed and Rosy hurled the davenport from him and scrambled to his feet. Mary was sobbing in a chair.

He walked up to her slowly and looked down at her a long moment.

"I'm sorry, Mary. I didn't mean to listen, but I couldn't help it."

"He hit me, Rosy," Mary sobbed out.

"I heard him," Rosy said quietly, too quietly. Mary looked up.

"Rosy, you won't do anything to him, will you?"

He studied her face before he answered. "He's your husband and you're my friend. I reckon I'll tell him—" his voice died as he watched her eyes. "No I won't," he said softly. "It's not my business. I reckon if you want me to do anything, I'll always be here to ask."

"D-don't do anything to him," she sobbed, then added bitterly: "The beast."

Rosy didn't say anything more, but uncomfortably twirled his hat while Mary sobbed desperately.

"It isn't the first time, Rosy," Mary said brokenly. "He's done it before."

Rosy waited until she stopped crying, then laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Pack some stuff. We're goin' to town."

Mary looked up at him. "Where?"

"Hammond's girl is alone. You can stay there with her. But I don't want you in this place."

"Is it Ted?"

"Partly."

Mary nodded dumbly. "Did I do right with Crowell, Rosy? Has Dave—"

"Let's go," Rosy cut in on her. "Dave hasn't done anything. And I'm just beginnin' to understand some things." He started for the door. "Pack some stuff. I'll saddle up."

He looked at her sitting forlorn in the deep chair and a sudden wave of pity engulfed him. "You did fine, Mary. Some time you'll understand how fine."

As Rosy raced for the corral, he already had a plan half formed. Laredo was in town. So was the sheriff. They could help him, could take care of Crowell, while he rode out to see about Dave. Maybe Laredo knew where Sayres' hangout was, and could tell him. Haltingly, painfully, a plan of action was fermenting in Rosy's mind. As he yanked the cinch tight, just as Mary came running out of the house, he smiled bleakly.

He had it!

CHAPTER XIII

"WE'VE GOT YOU, TURNER."

DAVE had argued with the sheriff at the Lake. He hadn't mentioned his intentions until they had found the tracks, which were plentiful on the side of the lake against the mountain. They had been washed badly, but they could be followed. They led around the base of Old Cartridge to the rock-rim, where they skirted the mountain. And here, where the trail was only a few feet wide, the dynamiters had placed a last charge, blowing the trail out behind them and cutting off pursuit. It meant that Dave would have to go down into the valley again and ride north for ten miles or so until the rock-rim petered out and he could enter the canyons. He told the sheriff this, and said that he wanted to ride alone. At first the sheriff had objected, but Dave was firm. It was one man's work, and not to be attempted by two or twenty. Hank had given in grudgingly, but had agreed to ride to the D Bar T and stay the night, telling Mary of the dynamiting.

At parting Dave had borrowed a Colt from him, and a handful of cartridges. The gun he wrapped in his slicker and tied behind the cantle, for the rain was over. He rode down the wash again, past the Draw Three and headed up the valley. There was a rough pack trail to follow that skirted the dry wash, and he let his sturdy roan pick the pace, for there would be some rough riding further on in the canyon country.

He thought of everything that happened to him since he had come home. None of it made sense. Why would any one first try to bushwhack him, then destroy his ranch?

He knew only too well that he was ruined. With the water gone, the D Bar T was worthless. But what hurt him the most was that Mary was ruined too. It didn't matter so much to him, since he could get out and draw cowpuncher's wages, and so could Rosy. But Mary was different. He knew her affection for the ranch, and now that it was worthless and would scarcely support one person Mary and Ted would leave.

Winters would take up a position again as a mining engineer and Mary would follow him, maybe to Mexico, Alaska, South America, a wanderer on the face of the earth in pursuit of wages and a temporary home. Dave winced. It would be like penning up a wild horse in a dark barn and feeding him well, but watching him slowly pine away for the freedom of the open range.

Dave felt his weight shift against the cantle, drawing him out of his reverie. The horse was ascending a rocky ledge which rose up ahead. The trail had left the stream bed and had turned in toward the mountains. A limestone shelf, Dave reflected idly: first it probably backed up the water into a big lake which reached miles up the valley. Then the water from the outlet gradually sawed its way down through the limestone until the stream ran through a deep gorge. His horse settled into the muscle-stretching pull willingly and Dave settled back into his reverie.

He was yanked out of it by a dim warning whistle, a hissing. Automatically, his right hand streaked to his gun. He had it clear of leather when the rope settled around him and he was yanked from his saddle. He landed on his back, knocking the wind out of him, but he turned over. The rope had tightened above his elbows so that his forearm and gun were clear. Sixty feet off a rider, his rope dallied round the horn of his saddle, was just dismounting, oblivious to the fact that Dave could shoot.

Dave took a snap shot, saw the horse shy into the man and both disappear behind a rock as he was dragged forward helplessly on his chest. Then it was quiet, and Dave struggled to roll off his arm and get his gun clear.

"Better drop it, Turner," the man called from behind a rock. "We've got you."

Dave took as careful sight as he could, aiming where the rope disappeared around the rock. He shot and the rope snapped. He lunged to his feet.

This time he didn't hear the rope. It came from behind him. Two of them, he thought. It settled from behind with the viciousness of a striking snake around his waist, yanking his gun arm down close to his body. He sat down abruptly as the rope was jerked taut.

Feeling the rhythmic tugs of the rope as some one came cautiously hand over hand up to him, Dave turned his head. He saw two men approaching, one with both guns out.

"Don't move, Turner," one of them called.

Dave was jerked erect, and his guns taken from him. The man who tried to rope him first came out from behind his rock, nursing a skinned elbow, and joined his companions. This man had still, dead eyes, Dave noticed, and his body was heavy, formless, and his pants sagged over a bloated belly.

"Maybe you'd like us to finish what Freeman didn't," this man said with a sneer.

"So you know about Freeman, eh?" Dave asked.

Another of the men started to speak. He was a swarthy individual, dressed in tattered range clothes, and he spoke around a cheekful of tobacco which dribbled down his unshaven chin in brownish-yellow streaks. "Why shouldn't—" "Shut up, Lew," the heavy man ordered. "Let's get off this trail before somebody comes along."

They walked behind a rock off the trail. The other man, a small vicious-looking hard-case, with a rat's shifty eyes, prodded Dave with his gun.

Lew collected the horses, including Dave's and brought them behind the rock. The man with the dead eyes looked at his horse and cursed. Dave's shot had creased the horse's neck, making it bleed.

"You better trade nags with me, Reilly," he said to the rat-face. "This blood is liable to cause questions."

"Why? You goin' to town?"

"Sayres said to get 'em both, didn't he? And the red-headed *hombre* ain't here."

"All right," Reilly grunted. They seemed to ignore Dave with callous indifference.

"What's—" Dave began.

The outlaw with the dead eyes wheeled and drove his fist into Dave's face, sending him back against the rock. Reilly gouged Dave with the guns before he could stand erect again.

"That's for cuttin' down on us," Reilly snarled. "I ought to let you have it."

"Don't be a damned fool," the heavier man said. "You better take him off the trail, tie him and git goin'. I'm leavin'." He walked over to Reilly's horse, mounted, and rode off in the direction of town.

Reilly and Lew took Dave away from the road, behind a small butte. Reilly

sat down and regarded Dave silently. "Turner," he drawled, "you ain't got much sense fer a man your age."

Dave did not answer, wondering if this wasn't another ruse to taunt him into speaking so they could hit him again.

Reilly started to speak to him again but he turned to Lew instead. "We better take the Five Points trail to the shack, hadn't we? Stay off the trail?"

"Yeah. There's too damn many prospectors wanderin' the other trails." They ordered Dave to mount, then tied his feet in the stirrups and his hands behind his back. They seemed to be experienced at this sort of thing, Dave noted soberly, when they ordered him on the wounded horse, and not on his own, which made any attempt at escape more hopeless. When he was securely tied, Reilly came up to him and grinned.

"You'd be smart if you had any brains, Turner. You figgered we'd blew out the trail behind us on the rim and then rode for them canyons, didn't you?" He laughed. "Well, there's another trail down that mountain. Try and find it if you ever get back."

The outlaws guffawed and mounted their horses. A mile off to the east of the road, they picked up a dim trail and rode it steadily. Dave expected them to cut across west to the canyons behind Old Cartridge. But they were going east up the mountain. He was between them as they angled single file up its side. They left the sparse timber finally and headed into the broken country that Dave knew cropped out at the head of the valley.

Their ride was checked only once and that was when they had reached a pass that looked as if it would take them across the mountains to the east slope. The pass was narrow, guarded by two natural ramparts of rock, flat on top and higher than the jagged scarp of rocks stretching away from them. A dim trail snaked through the opening.

As they were about to enter it, a voice hailed them in the gathering dusk.

"Don't come no further."

"Shet up, Cassidy," Lew called out without raising his head.

"Where's the red-head?" Cassidy called down.

"Fat's after him," Lew growled. "Watch for 'em." He snapped a light to his cigarette and they rode through.

It was dark when they reached the ranch buildings. Dave could see nothing but several lighted windows in a building tucked in the folds of jagged rocky hills that made up these badlands.

The door was immediately opened and Lew called for a lantern. A sandy-haired cowpuncher came out with it and Dave, with a start of surprise, recognized him as the man who had stuck up Quinn on the train.

"Well, Turner, how's the hero now?" He sneered. His face slid into sullen ugliness. "Let's get that *hombre* off. I'm goin' to see how far my fist will go down his thoat."

"I reckon you won't," a voice drawled from the door. The man who had spoken was lounging against the door, thumbs hooked in his belt. He was so big and tall that his head almost touched the top of the door. His light hair was closely cropped on a head as perfectly shaped as a statue's. His features were even and his lazy smile was as winning as a woman's. His presence in this bunch of riff-raff was surprising. Dave narrowed his eyes in bewilderment. Was this the Sayres that Fat had mentioned? Were Sayres and Crowell working together?

The sandy-haired puncher took a step toward Dave, his fists clenched.

The man in the doorway spoke again, an edge on his mellow voice. "I said you won't, Chinch."

Chinch's hands unfisted and he whirled to glare at the speaker. "What the hell's the difference, Sayres, as long as—"

"Cut it," Sayres snapped. "Step in, Turner."

Dave went in. The inside of the shack showed an ill-kept bunkhouse, double-decked wall bunks surrounding a large table on which bottles, cards and glasses were scattered.

"Sit down," Sayres said politely. Dave sat, wondering what was in store for him. Sayres sat on the table and studied Dave, his handsome, careless face inscrutable. They sized each other up without a flicker of an eye. To Dave, Sayres was a misfit in this crew. His overalls were clean and neat, his boots expensive and well-kept. The guns which rode in soft leather holsters at his hips were worn, but oiled and shiny. Everything about him was attractive—too much so for Dave's peace of mind.

Sayres' opinion of Dave was summed up in a little narrowing of his eyes and the flip of his cigarette into the corner. He lifted a soft Stetson from the table and put it down again as if debating something.

"Like a smoke?" he asked Dave.

"I would," Dave answered.

Sayres lit a cigarette and put it in Dave's mouth. They sat quietly, Dave with tense muscles, until the three other men came in. Dave resolved to let Sayres speak first.

"Who gave Turner that shiner?" Sayres asked.

"Fat," Lew grunted.

"It's a good thing that you didn't." He turned to Chinch. "Saddle up. You got to take the paper to Crowell."

Dave's face remained set and watchful but his blood quickened. So it *was* Crowell, he thought.

Chinch glared at Sayres, who laughed softly. "If you're a good boy, Chinch, and don't sulk, I might give you a poke at him."

Chinch nodded and the attention turned to Dave.

"Wonderin' what we're talking about, Turner?" Sayres said.

Dave nodded. Sayres reached over and removed the cigarette butt from Dave's lips. Dave nodded his thanks and laid his tied hands on the table.

"Especially the paper, eh?" Sayres continued good-naturedly.

This time Dave shrugged carelessly and watched Sayres take a paper from his shirt pocket, unfold it, and lay it on the table.

"That's a deed to your half of the D Bar T," Sayres said evenly. "You're here to sign it." He reached in his pocket for a cigarette, keeping his mild blue eyes on Dave's face.

"Maybe," Dave said.

Sayres laughed easily. "You take a lot of spookin', don't you?" Over his shoulder he said: "Take off your guns, boys, and untie him."

"Why?" Lew asked.

"He might grab one, you damned fool," Sayres said, without looking at him.

DAVE watched them take off their guns, after which they gathered around him and watched Lew untie the knots of his bonds.

"Turner," Sayres began, "you might as well know what this is all about. You're goin' to sign your ranch over to a man named Crowell, shall we say? Names change. That name is liable to change too, because I doubt if it's his. But no matter. The point is, you have to sign the deed." He stopped, studying Dave's face closely. "I'm givin' you one chance. I'm askin' you to sign without bein' forced to. Will you?"

"No," Dave answered promptly.

"That's too bad," Sayres said softly. "Maybe I didn't make myself plain enough. We want the ranch. You sign your half away and the paper is produced to your sister. When she sees that you have signed we expect her to sign her half away. We're giving her quite a reasonable sum, Turner. Much more than the ranch is worth to you and her.

Wouldn't it be better if you signed and not forced me to. . . ." he left the finish dangling.

"No."

Sayres studied the tip of his cigarette. "You know," he began in a conversational tone, "I've often wondered at people who threaten torture and then don't carry it out. But I can swear I'd go through with it. Do you believe me?"

Dave did not answer.

"For instance," Sayres continued. "Suppose I got an axe and ordered you to sign that paper. You wouldn't. All right. I told you to sign or I'd cut your little finger off. Still you wouldn't." He paused. "I'd cut your little finger off then. After that, I'd give you another chance. If you still refused I'd cut your fourth finger off—and so on until you didn't have a finger left." He laughed easily. "Of course, you couldn't sign the paper with no fingers, but then I would still show you that I meant what I said. You see, it wouldn't do you any good to refuse, Turner, because you'd lose every finger on both hands. That's hardly worth a ranch, is it?"

Still Dave did not answer.

"I'm asking you once again. Will you sign?" Sayres said slowly.

"No." Dave said quietly.

"Get that hammer, Lew," Sayres said. Lew got a heavy hammer from one of the bunks and handed it to Sayres.

"Now spread his left hand out, palm down, on the table," Sayres ordered. Dave made a lunge to get up, but the four men pounced on him and he was borne down by their sheer weight. It took another three minutes to get his hand on the table. Lew held it with both hands, leaning his weight on it.

Sayres drew a ten-penny spike from his shirt pocket and looked at Dave.

"Observe this, Turner," Sayres said. "You see, I mean what I say." Placing the spike point on the back of Dave's hand just below the third finger, he drove the nail through the flesh and into the table with five savage, accurate blows.

Dave's face drained of color and he throttled the cry that rose in his throat as the nail seared through his flesh. His eyes blazed as he looked at the calm face of Sayres. Lew withdrew to one side and all of them looked at the hand nailed fast to the table, blood welling up around the shiny nailhead.

"Now get the axe," Sayres said. Lew, white-faced, disappeared outside and came back with an axe which he handed to Sayres. Dave felt every throb of his heart in his hand and the slightest movement was exquisite torture.

"I might as well tell you the rest, Turner," Sayres said. "I'm going to cut your fingers off, one by one. I'll start with the little finger on your left hand and I'll end up with the thumb on your right." His limpid, half-curious gaze settled on Dave's face. "Are you such a fool, Turner, that you think your sister can't be killed? If we wouldn't stop at torturing, do you think we'd stop at killing her? Winters too? Then the ranch would revert to whoever holds the mortgages and we'd buy it from them. You can't beat us, you see."

Dave's face was parchment-colored now, partly from the pain which he could endure, but mostly from what Sayres had just told him. He suddenly realized that he was dealing with a madman. He knew now that Sayres was not bluffing and that he could and would kill Mary and Winters after he had tortured him to death. Sayres' smooth voice cut in on his thoughts.

"I'm asking you again, Turner. Will you sign?"

Dave looked at his hand. Sayres had placed the gleaming axe blade squarely on the base of his little finger. The hammer was raised. Sayres looked at him inquiringly.

"I'll sign," Dave said weakly.

Only then did all of them realize that they had been holding their breaths

which now they exhaled in a small gust.

"Good," Sayres said jovially. He took a pen from a shelf near by along with a bottle of ink. The paper was spread before Dave, the pen tendered him. He signed his name.

Sayres glanced at it briefly, nodded, then took the hammer and, stooping under the table, knocked the spike up. Then he pressed Dave's hand firmly on the table, took the claw of the hammer and yanked the nail out. Blood bubbled out of the wound as Dave drew his hand to him and tried to move the fingers.

"I reckon there's not much to say to a coyote like you, Sayres," Dave said, his voice trembling with a suppressed rage. "Except this: "If I live long enough, I'll kill you like I would a rattlesnake."

Sayres laughed pleasantly. "You better tie him up again, Lew."

Chinch stepped forward. "What about that promise?"

Sayres shrugged. "Go ahead."

Chinch stepped up to Dave, who was still seated, planted his feet firmly and drew back his hand.

Dave lunged out of his chair and drove his bleeding fist into Chinch's face, sending him sprawling across the room and into a bunk where he lay inert.

Sayres laughed boisterously and held up a hand to prevent the others from hitting Dave. "Leave him alone. It served that damn fool Chinch right," he said. Lunging off the table, he walked over to the bunk and slapped Chinch's face until the unconscious man groaned and sat erect.

"Still feel like curlin' your tail, Chinch?" Sayres asked. "We sort of liked that rough and tumble way of fightin' you have."

Chinch glared at him, but made no move to get up.

"Now get saddled and hightail it," Sayres ordered. "Crowell's waiting. Get goin'." Chinch slunk out, not even looking up at the other men, and Sayres turned to Lew. "Take him out in the back room and put those leg irons on him."

"I thought—" Reilly began.

"Shut up," Sayres ordered crisply, his glance fleeting to Dave and then back to Lew. "Do as I say. Afterwards, come back here."

Dave was prodded into a one-room addition at the rear of the shack which served as a storeroom of sorts. He was handcuffed, seated on the floor facing the log wall and his feet were manacled with a logging chain to the drop log of the addition. He could lie down, but the semicircle in which he could move on the floor was bare of everything, even a blanket. When they were finished, Sayres came in to look over the job and after grunting his approval left with the other two. Lew, the last out of the room, slammed the door shut after him, but it swung open a couple of inches so that Dave could see them moving in front of the crack occasionally, and a dim shaft of light filtered into the room.

"Get something to eat," Sayres ordered. Dave could hear him pull up one of the crude chairs to the table and pour a drink.

The outer door opened and Chinch spoke to Sayres. "Ready."

"All right," Dave heard Sayres say, "you better pour leather into it." The paper exchanged hands. "When you're finished look up Fat and by God if you get drunk, I'll drag you all the way from Single Shot to here at the end of a rope. Afterwards, I don't care if you get the snakes, but lay off it now."

Chinch grunted and the door slammed. Dave could hear the rattle of a frypan, but the men were evidently smoking in silence. An occasional slap of a card on the bare table told him some one was playing solitaire. His hand throbbed achingly with the pumping of his heart and his fingers were stiff and numb. Lying on his back and staring at the ceiling he tried to read some sense

into all that had happened to him. Headed, as far as he knew, by a man named Crowell (wrong name, he thought automatically) they were trying to get the ranch. Why? Reilly had admitted that he had blown the lake out, thereby ruining the ranch. Dave racked his brain for an explanation as to why they would want a spread that they had impoverished. Of course, if Crowell had the money he could build the lake up again and try to uncover the springs, but the money spent in fixing that and paying this gang of killers would not make the project worth while. Then too, Dave thought, they would have to face the music sooner or later from the sheriff, whosever hands the place drifted into. But would they? If he were dead, unaccounted for. . . .

Lew's voice broke into his reverie. "When'll the gal be here?"

"Not very long now. We got to get him out of the way," Sayres said.

A short silence. "God, that's dirty work!" Lew said.

Sayres laughed. "Loosin' your guts, Lew?"

"Hell no, but I like to have a man wearin' guns anyway."

"You liar," Sayres said calmly. "In that job we pulled off on the other side of the mountains last month, you took a bead on that night-herder and laughed when he rolled off his horse like a sack of meal."

"He was wearin' guns, though," Lew insisted.

"Sure. And he might as well have been without them for all the chance he got to use them. Don't get pious, Lew. It doesn't fit you."

Lew didn't say anything for a moment. Dave fought down a cold wave of terror and fear. A girl! That would be Mary. They were going to get her, bring her up here, and they were on their way now. More than that, they were going to shoot him like a coyote. And what would they do to Mary when he was gone?

"Chief, who's the gent behind all this?" Lew asked.

"If I was you, I wouldn't ask that," Sayres said slowly. "I don't know myself. All I know is that Crowell is paying me, and paying plenty. If we live long enough, we can see who takes over the Turner spread."

"Who do you think it is? Crowell couldn't do it, because he knows we could take it from him and he couldn't squawk."

"I'm not asking, I told you."

Lew's voice was cunning when he spoke again. "Why can't we take it from the hombre that gets it, the hombre that's payin' Crowell? He can't take it to law, because he'd have to tell how he got it. We can run him off."

Sayres snorted. "You think a man that can pull this off wouldn't think of that? No. Whoever he is, when he takes that spread over, and when he gets the Draw Three, he'll toll in about fifty of the toughest hard-cases he can find. We'll leave them plenty far alone, Lew. Just remember that. We've got a nice game here of our own without inviting trouble." Then: "Put that bottle down! You got work tonight Lew, and you better not be drunk!"

"All right, all right," Lew said placatingly.

There was a clatter of dishes, then a long silence. Dave thought over what he had heard. There was some one behind Crowell even, a man who had money, brains, and the ability to keep his sinister identity a secret. And nothing, not even human lives, stood in his ruthless way.

Sayres' voice, a little clogged with food, came to him again.

"When you jaspers get back from this next job, you'll find the girl here. And if one of you mention Crowell's name in front of her, you might just as well give yourself up to the sheriff, because you'll be a dead man. Get that? She's got to be here without ever hearing the name of Crowell."

(To Be Continued.)

UNDER THE NET

by Perry Adams

DINNER was over. We'd just drunk the toast to the King-Emperor and were about to drift out into the ante-room. The colonel, who hadn't dined in mess, came in hurriedly, still in khaki, and spoke to the adjutant in a quick, low voice.

I'd been sitting near the adjutant and so was near him now. I heard snatches of what the colonel said:

". . . Got away a week ago, it seems. . . . Kept it secret because . . . Time to reach Peshawar . . . Better double the guard."

Then I moved out of earshot. I was almost in the ante-room when the adjutant called me back.

The colonel said: "Bob, Sher Ali escaped from Lucknow Prison several days ago. The news just reached brigade; the general passed it on to me. The commandant at Lucknow kept the break quiet, hoping his people would catch Sher Ali long before this. Well, they haven't."

The pair of them looked at me curiously. You see, I'd been in command of the party that nailed Sher Ali, several months before, stealing rifles out near Michni. He was about the last of the notorious rifle thieves on India's Northwest Frontier; for fifteen years there had been heavy rewards offered for his capture. His trial was short and sweet: they gave him a life sentence.

As he was led away he pointed a shaking finger at me and screamed:

"The life of that white pig shall be forfeit for this. By the beard of the Prophet I swear it!"

Twice, since he'd been put away, messages to his now scattered followers had been intercepted, urging them to avenge his capture by slaying the "white pig". A vindictive gentlemen, Sher Ali. Of course, it was all in the day's work: soldiers and policemen don't pay too much attention to such threats.

But now that he'd broken jail? Colonel and adjutant were looking at me not only curiously, but solicitously.

"Oh, well," I said, "he knows every one expects him to come back to the Frontier. He's a fox; this is the last place on earth he'd head for."

"Yes?" asked the colonel softly. "He was seen in Nowshera—yesterday." Nowshera was only forty miles from Peshawar.

That didn't sound quite so good. "Even so," I argued, "I don't think he'd run his neck into a noose by coming after me."

"The general seems to think otherwise," said the colonel shortly, "and I agree with him. Better keep all your doors and windows locked until this blows over. Don't take this bird too lightly, young feller, or you may wake up dead."

With that I strolled into the anteroom, where some one called me to make a fourth at contract. I'd been on a heavy binge in the gunners' mess the night before; I was dead tired. After a single rubber I found a substitute and headed for bed.

My company commander, Jack Mitchell, and I lived in a bungalow a hundred yards from the mess compound; just then Jack happened to be away on some refresher course at Mhow. The early autumn night was clear, with no moon, and hot. As I walked the short distance down the road, I kept thinking with distaste about having to seal myself in behind locked doors and windows. Still, it was the sound thing to do.

At our little gate I turned in. My white mess jacket brought the sentries running. They were, I saw, men of my own company.

"Carry on," I said lightly, "I'm not Sher Ali."

"But he will come," one of them replied, in his guttural Pushtu. "Sleep with one eye open, sahib."

In the bedroom, the oil lamp was burning low. Gool Mohammed, my big Pathan servant, squatted in a corner, more than half asleep. He jumped up noiselessly and raised the lamp. The room had an unfamiliar look.

"I moved your honor's bed," Gool Mohammed explained. "I have been over to Mitchell sahib's side, there locking the windows and the door into his bath *godown*. Here, all is secure."

"Why move the bed?" I asked.

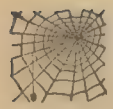
"It was too near the window." He fumbled with a leather holster and, half shyly, produced my Webley. "Sahib, best sleep with revolver under pillow."

I smiled. "All right. Put it there. Then you can go to bed."

He raised an edge of the mosquito net, where it was tucked under the mattress; slipped his arm inside.

"May your honor sleep well," he said, salaaming gravely.

He went out. I heard the snap of the front door's spring lock, followed by a slight scuffing when he stepped into his slippers on the veranda. As I undressed, something of all this apprehension at last communicated itself to me. I half thought of leaving the lamp turned low, then remembered I never could sleep with a light going. Instead, I found a flashlight in the bureau. With this in hand, I blew out the lamp and felt my way in under the net. What with revolver and flashlight under the pillow, my head seemed to rest on a rock pile. I thought drowsily, "Never sleep with all this hardware—must shift the damned things." But I was tired out. . . .



I CAME awake, every nerve strangely tingling. No noise. Not a sound, save for the ticking of my watch on the bureau—and breathing. My own.

But something was off color, something was terribly wrong. I was lying on my back, right arm flung over my head.

And my fingers gripped a thick wrist: my sense of touch told me it couldn't be anything else. That wrist, absolutely motionless, was *inside* the netting.

What would his next move be? Blood pounding in my ears, I lay there. Why was he so quiet? Had I unexpectedly grasped his wrist in my sleep? Was he waiting until I should relax?

The gun. Yes, but how to get it without advertising that I was awake? I thought:

"If he'd only move a little—give me some line on what he's going to do."

But he didn't. And the total lack of animation in that wrist became a horror. I waited and waited. . . . and waited. All at once I knew I couldn't stand the strain longer.

Come what might, I'd yank that wrist suddenly toward me—try to smash him while he was off balance. It seemed my only chance.

In the split second between decision and action, outside a Lee-Enfield coughed thickly. Came, then, a high, agonized scream; many boots pounded the hard earth.

Some one fumbled with the front door lock: I heard the door crash open and Gool Mohammed burst in, eyes rolling, a lighted hurricane lamp in his hand.

"Quick, sahib—come. They have shot Sher Ali!"

I lay there like a fool, unable to get up. Left shoulder and arm were numb. My right hand still gripped that wrist—my own.

THE GREATER KOODOO

ONE of the largest and finest of all the antelopes of the world, and easily the prize trophy among African game. The hunter who brings down his Greater Koodoo may well be proud since the animal haunts thick, dry thorn-brush country of a rugged character, has good vision, a keen sense of smell and very sensitive ears, and is constantly on the watch for its enemies. The Koodoo's gait is a broken pace, at the walk or trot, but it breaks into a tearing run when alarmed.—LYNN BOGUE HUNT.

More Than a Ticket

By Richard Howells Watkins

BY THE clock the sun had long since risen. But in the sky there was no dawn.

Shep Wick, with his tricks at wheel and lookout over and with breakfast under his belt, lingered on the well deck, scanning the murky haze enveloping the ship. Warm, slashing rain out of that dark sky pelted him, quite unregarded. He was not alone. Unease kept men from rest on the *Elizabeth Harrod*.

Under Shep's feet the old ship, groaning and shuddering, seemed to be quickening the dance that following seas had forced her into soon after she had rounded Cape Catoche.

Shep looked with misgivings at the gray water alongside. He saw not the slightest gleam of blue. These were no honest tropic seas.

"Water's shoaling," he remarked to Sam Aborn, at his shoulder. "That long swell that's been chasing us is chopping up."

His fat, scowling watchmate, an ex-officer turned A.B., uttered a derogatory croak, a sound that disparaged sea, sky, ship and crew, and particularly young Shep Wick.

"You don't get deep water on the Campeche Bank, Mister," Aborn retorted, emphasizing that sarcastic title. "And you don't get harbors of refuge off the north coast of Yucatan, either."

He wagged his plump jowls at the sky and at Shep.

"You'll see something before you've served out your time for second mate's ticket," he prophesied darkly, and swung around to face the little group of seamen and firemen behind him. His voice lifted; became almost shrill. "You'll all see something, and you won't like it, either! A hurricane's no joke. And in

shoal water—with an obstinate, incompetent fool like that on the bridge—"

He cut off his voice with startling suddenness and jerked a hand upward. They all glanced involuntarily at the bearded, heavy-browed man who tramped the planks high above them. He was their captain, arbiter of their destiny and they had no faith in that man of varying moods. Now weak; now overstrong; how were they to trust him?

Their eyes were held to the flying bridge by a new development.

Shep's forehead puckered thoughtfully.

The radio operator, his shirt glued by the rain to his bony body, had come up on the bridge with a folded slip of paper in one hand, a pencil gripped in the other.

Captain Tenby took the message and read it, while Sparks lingered, watching his face. The master looked up, scowled at the operator and jerked his thumb aft.

Obediently Sparks started for the ladder. Captain Tenby overtook him, thrust him aside and descended first, heading toward the chartroom.

Mr. Palmer, the youthful third mate, hung tensely over the after rail of the bridge; then, noting the equally frank interest of the helmsmen, straightened up and walked over to look at the compass.

"He should have hove to and waited when he had sea room and deep water under him to see where the hurricane was heading, instead of running in deep on the bank!" Sam Aborn cried, in that high, disturbing voice of his. "You'll see! I know these twisters—and I know my navigation better than—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Shep Wick in disgust as the men stirred uneasily. "We all know you've got a mate's ticket."

"Which is more than you have—"

"West Indian hurricanes don't often curve as far west as Yucatan," Shep broke in. "And the old man would have the owners on his neck if he—"

Captain Tenby came out of the chartroom on the double then and ran up the bridge ladder. The men's eyes noted his haste with deepening misgivings. Tenby spoke to the third and the helmsman.

At once the nose of the old freighter began to swing to starboard. It kept on swinging until the choppy seas were hitting her almost on the beam; then steadied. Mr. Michaels, the mate, clattered up on the bridge.

"What's that mean, Aborn?" asked a fireman.

"It means he's running off the coast for searoom," Aborn replied. "But it's too late now! We'll catch hell!"

Nobody denied it. The sombre sky; the feeling that the world had paused, daunted them.

"D'you know how far from the ten-fathom curve we are—how far from deep water?" Aborn demanded. "Close to a hundred miles! That radio message warned the old fool the hurricane was coming our way! Blast him—Chucking our lives away because he couldn't make up his mind!"

Covertly Shep glanced from face to face. Firemen and seamen had all inspected with awe Sam Aborn's license as mate and seen his sour criticism of the *Elizabeth Harrod's* master justified on this long, hot swing around the Caribbean. Now they were impressed, anxious, almost jittery, for the ex-officer was plainly apprehensive.

"A swell coffin salesman you'd make!" Shep said to Aborn. He walked to starboard and leaned his elbows on the rail.

Up on the bridge Captain Tenby pointed a finger down at the men and spoke harshly to the mate.

There, in the east, where this uneasy sea was coming from, the murk seemed

to Shep a little darker. That, as he knew from his study of cyclonic storms in the book, was warning of the hurricane's bearing.

"If the center's southeast of us we ought to get northeasterly winds and if it's northwest of us we ought to get northwesterly winds," he reckoned uneasily. "Right now I'd say the breeze was north and piping up. Either way, they're onshore winds. And without too much water under our keel and shoal spots and dry spots here and there—"

Mr. Michaels, the mate, a mild man who knew his business, cargo handling and the ship's work, unwillingly descended the ladder to the well deck just then. Gus Schenk, the boatswain, massive, stocky, bald-headed, trundled along behind him on his short legs, scowling at Aborn.

"Come on, men!" said Mr. Michaels, in his thin voice. "Don't be congregating like this! Watch below better go below and get some sleep. We're in for a bit of weather and—"

"Is that an order, sir?" Sam Aborn demanded. "Do I have to go into that stinking, steaming fo'c's'le when I've done my trick? I don't want to be drowned like a rat in a trap!"

Mr. Michaels hesitated slightly but perceptibly.

"The order was not to congregate like this," he said. "Nobody's going to be drowned."

He turned away quickly and hurried back to the bridge. But Gus Schenk remained.

"Split up!" he bawled at Sam Aborn. "Captain's orders! Move or I'll move you!"

Sam Aborn walked stiff-legged toward the forecastle. "You know what this means," he said over his shoulder to the dispersing group. "The skipper's losing his head—shooting off his mouth in unnecessary orders—because he didn't give the right orders in time! You'll see—if you live long enough!"

The men stared upward with surly eyes at the master. They growled among themselves and moved slowly.

GUS SCHENK watched until Aborn vanished; then swung over to Shep Wick at the rail. The wind was rising now; playing a savage tune in the stays and guys.

"Wha'd' you know about that guy, Aborn?" Gus bellowed. "Tryin' to raise more trouble, ain't he?"

"I'd say he'd been through a hurricane some time and cracked his nerve," Shep replied, keeping his eyes on the roiled, dirty water alongside. "They can be tough—hurricanes."

"And they can be nothin' but a lot of air," the boatswain said. He swung his long, corded arms and smacked his leather palms together with a crack like a snapping cargo boom. "Let her come! Jeez! It does look shoal, though, don't it?"

Shep nodded, not mentioning the Gulf Stream, the counter current and what a hurricane can do to currents and tidal sets. For twenty-four hours now they had been navigating only by dead reckoning and the lead under leaden, unrevealing skies. That meant their position on the Bank was sheer guesswork.

"Progreso's one lousy port in a blow, which is why the skipper ain't goin' there," Schenk said. "You lie off about four miles an' lighters bring—"

Something was happening on the bridge. The master had jerked his binoculars out of the box and was clapping them to his eyes. The mate had moved to the engine telegraph. The third was pointing to something revealed by the increasing light, a point or so on the starboard bow.

Captain Tenby turned and shouted an order. Mr. Michaels, ringing down the engines to dead slow, relayed the order to the helmsman. The man was already frantically turning the wheel.

From the well deck nothing could be seen. There was a rush to the forecastle head. Sam Aborn and some others came out of the forecastle on the run.

"Breakers—a dry spot—maybe a cay!" Shep suggested. "They wouldn't get that excited about anything else. Off our reckoning some."

The freighter's head was swinging hard to port. Of a sudden Shep, despite his clutch on the rail, went down on the iron deck with the huge boatswain sprawling on top of him. In his ears, though felt rather than heard, was a soft, shuddering grind.

"She's struck!" shrilled Sam Aborn. He came leaping down from the forecastle head. His high voice, like an intensified shriek of the wind, cut across the taut nerves of the bewildered men as they scrambled to their feet on the tilting deck.

"Struck! He's stranded us, and a hurricane coming!"

Tenby, on the bridge was frozen; voice and body out of action.

A wave slapped the side of the lifting ship and sent a spurt of water flying across the well deck. It was no more than a dollop but the slash of it on the frightened men was enough. Weeks of hatred and distrust of that paralyzed shipmaster mated then with terror of the hurricane. And the result was panic.

In a silent rush they charged after the man who had been an officer. They stampeded across the well deck toward the ladder that led to the saloon deck. Up it, fighting for place, they clambered.

"Let's go!" Shep shouted to the staring boatswain. "They're all haywire!" He pelted aft.

From the flying bridge came a torrent of commands from Tenby and the mates. Then Tenby darted down the ladder and disappeared into his stateroom.

The men fell upon the double-lashed boat on the leeward side of the fiddley in a bunch, jostling, colliding, swirling, in their efforts to cut away lashings and swing her out on the davits. Toward this mass plunged the mates and, from their rooms aft of the fiddley, the chief and two assistant engineers.

Shep charged into the vortex of struggling men with one motive in mind. He fought his way to the after davit and swung his lean right fist at Sam Aborn's fat jaw.

The blow landed. The forecastle leader tumbled over the tub in which the davit fall was coiled. Shep shoved him under the boat, away from trampling feet.

A fireman, plunging frantically, senselessly, from one davit to the other, took Shep's jab under the ribs and subsided, soundless, windless, incapable of immediate movement. Close to Shep sounded Gus Schenk's challenging bellow and the thud of fists.

"Lay off!" Shep called quietly. "Easy, you guys!"

That low, steady, persistent voice had its effect.

The men surged away from the boat, still frightened but with reviving self-control.

A gun cracked close to Shep's ear and a man screamed in a taut falsetto. Shep jerked his head around. Captain Tenby had come rushing out of his room with an automatic. He was about to fire again pointblank into the backward swirling mob. Shep knocked up the gun with a cry of protest and the bullet roared into the sky.

Somebody hit him with something on the side of the head. The milling throng wavered before his eyes and then, as he was hit again, blackness exploded over everything.

When he came to from a dash of salt water in his face, he was being carried across the well deck into the forecastle. Around him, with their wild fear converted into bitter resentment, shambled

others of the crew. They hurled oaths and threats over their shoulders.

Captain Tenby, with his gun ready, Mr. Michaels, and three other officers herded them along. The mate's face was very white and Mr. Lind, the second mate, nursed a bleeding arm.

"In, you blasted, sneaking mutineers!" Tenby bellowed gustily. "In, before I shoot!"

The beaten crew laid Shep on his bunk in the slanting forecastle. He sat up at once, shaking the cobwebs out of his head. There was a textbook on navigation under his leg; he tossed it to the foot of the bunk. It didn't seem to apply, right now. He stood up.

The wind was shrilling harshly outside; the thump of seas, heavier now, despite the cay and reef that lay to windward, resounded upon the side of the ship. The engine was jumping on its bed but the thrashing screw never budged her nose, hard on the reef.

On the floor Sven Lassen, an unlucky, slow-moving Swede, was groaning over a bullet wound in his stomach. The seamen and firemen bunched around him, looking down disconsolately, shooting covert glances at each other and, to a man, cursing the captain. Only by venting continuous abuse on Tenby could each man keep himself from the scorching thought of his own cowardice. They damned Tenby's eyes and guts; his mother and his mulish jaw. In that whipped-up fury they almost forgot the stranded ship and the slowly increasing wind in the dark sky.

Grimly Shep looked around for their erstwhile leader. He saw Sam Aborn sitting on the edge of his bunk, with his face hidden in his hands, disregarded. The ex-officer was a sad sight; a shell of a man.

At the end of the passage leading out to the deck, Mr. Palmer, with the captain's gun, and Gus Schenk, with a steel marlinspike, stood guard. The foremast hands and black gang were prisoners. Their guards were not looking at them; they were staring at the eastern horizon.

Joe Silva, the fireman that Shep had laid out during the fight, stopped in front of him and laughed with savage satisfaction.

"You'll get yours, baby," he prophesied. "And it won't be no officer's ticket, neither. That cock-eyed captain thinks you was leading us and when he thinks something—you know. I heard him swear to fix you for it."

Shep Wick nodded silently. Silva offered no other violence than clenched hands.

Shep walked past him, over to Aborn, grabbed his shoulder and pointed at the wounded sailor.

"Come on, Sam!" Shep commanded, not too harshly. "Turn loose your first aid on that fellow!"

Sam Aborn started up. He stood still. Then, as Shep's fingers tightened menacingly on his plump shoulder, he slunk across the slanting floor to Sven Lassen.

Shep Wick sat down on his bunk, listened to the wind and stared at his shipmates.

"No use trying to knock reason into Tenby's skull," he told himself. "If he thinks I'm guilty, he'll never quit thinking so."

None of the firemen went back to their own forecastle. They stayed bunched with the sailors, egging each other on in keeping up the torrent of malediction poured on Captain Tenby.

Shep was thinking.

Joe Silva uttered a sudden oath. "What are we waiting for?" he demanded. "To die below when that hurricane rolls her over?"

"That's what'll happen!" croaked a sailor.

"Come on!" Silva cried. "We'll rush these two slobs outside and make a play for our lives!"

The men looked at him apathetically.

Shep Wick laughed loudly. His eyes swung piercingly from one face to an-

other as they glowered uncertainly at him. Shep ignored them; spoke to Aborn.

"How is he, doctor?"

Sam Aborn spat. "I can't see him dyin' of it," he said.

Shep nodded. He walked out into the passage and spoke to the uneasy Mr. Palmer.

"I'd like to talk to the captain, sir," he said.

The young third mate scowled at him, while Gus Schenk, staring, scratched his head sorrowfully.

"You damned mutineer, who the hell do you think you are?" Palmer roared with much ferocity.

Shep Wick smiled coldly. "I seem to be the leader of the mutineers. Do you turn me down on your own responsibility?"

Palmer wavered. Then he gestured with his gun.

"Get inside," he commanded. "Gus, go up and tell Captain Tenby this rat wants to talk."

THERE was a delay—a long delay. The men watched Shep warily. Then, under the escort of Mr. Michaels, Shep Wick crossed the well deck and ascended to the chartroom. The mate was silent; talking would not be too easy in the gusty air. Over his shoulder Shep caught a glimpse of the black and sullen east. The darkness of the sky seemed to be slowly concentrating there but the true hurricane cloud was not yet up over the sea.

Captain Tenby, masked by a formidable frown, faced him at the chart table.

"Well?" he demanded. "You've done for yourself, young man. I won't listen to any whining."

"Whining won't do me any good against that, captain," Shep Wick said, and flung an arm toward the east. "And right now that's all I want to get through."

Tenby was looking eastward; so, too, was Mr. Michaels. It was not a sight a seaman on a stranded ship could long disregard, that sinister horizon.

"If we could get her off, captain, we'd have a chance for our lives—and you'd have a chance to save your ship," Shep suggested softly.

Tenby snarled at him. "I know those dogs!" he said. "They won't work for me now! Why should they? They might as well die like rats in the fo'c's'le as live like rats in a Federal pen!"

The shipmaster looked at his mate. Mr. Michaels nodded agreement, slowly and reluctantly.

"They won't work now," he muttered. "They're broken, sore, cowed! And it would take hard, dangerous, willing work even to make a try at saving her."

He shook his grizzled head. "They ain't capable of it—not to save their lives, they ain't!"

"Right!" Tenby rasped. He jerked a finger toward the forecastle. "Get back!" he commanded. "I've radioed for a tug. We'll wait this out up here and you'll wait it out down there—every sneaking son of you!"

"Will they send a tug, sir?" Shep Wick inquired meaningly, with a flick of his eyes eastward.

Tenby cursed him—cursed Shep as the men forward had cursed Tenby—in a savage flood of invective. From the grim-visaged, obstinate man it was a strange, shocking breakdown of control. Mr. Michaels stirred unhappily; opened his mouth and shut it again.

"They've lost my ship, God blast them!" Tenby shrieked.

Shep Wick leaned forward.

"If I got them straightened out—ready to work—eager to fight it out—couldn't they save her, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Michaels' hand, unobtrusively, was on his frothing commander's arm.

Tenby stopped cursing and scowled at Shep Wick.

"I can do it, sir!" Shep insisted.

"You'll have willing men—jumping at the order!"

"What's your proposition?" Tenby snarled.

"Maybe this was no mutiny, sir," Shep suggested. "Maybe it was just a bit of a panic—a rush for the boats. Lassen isn't going to die. That shot you fired might just be a ricochet from a shot you let go in the air."

Clawing at hope, as a desperate man will, Captain Tenby looked at his mate.

"Well?" he demanded.

Mr. Michaels shook his head with greater reluctance than before but with equal conviction. "You can't use men cracked up like them—not in a job like this would be," he stated soberly. "They'd break for the boats again. We'd have red hell on deck. The chances at best are a hundred to one. They're better off below."

Shep Wick shrugged his shoulders and started at once to the door.

"Wait!" Tenby commanded. "Am I master here or are you, Mr. Michaels? We'll give this a chance. Get 'em out! Mr. Michaels, arm the officers!"

The men in the forecastle watched the entrance of Shep Wick with sullen, suspicious eyes. But Shep did not look at them. He walked down the slant to his bunk and sat on it and laughed silently, in a veritable paroxysm of mirth. He rocked back and forth.

"Jeez!" flared Joe Silva, the fireman. "Where in hell is anything to laugh at on this wagon? We'll be fish food ten minutes after that thing hits us!"

Sam Aborn plucked up voice and malignance.

"He's got something to laugh at!" he shrilled. "He's squared things for himself and—"

Shep stopped laughing. "That would do me a lot of good, swashing around Campeche bank with seaweed in my mouth and no face!" he snapped. "You fool! It's the old man I'm laughing at. He's scared—scared white, out of his breath—scared worse than we are, the lousy quitter!"

They gawked at him with protruding eyes.

"He is?" cried Joe Silva. "That damned old ramrod's scared like—"

He inflated his chest and laughed. "I always knew the old gasbag had no guts. Yella, huh?"

"Yella!" shouted another. "I knew he was yella! That's why he pulled that gun on us when we was gettin' the boats ready for lowerin'. He was scared wild!"

They looked at each other, reprieved men—no longer cowards. They laughed together and slapped each other on the back.

Outside the wind moaned rising threats in the rigging but they never heeded that. The hated old man was not their better—he was scared worse than they were. Why should they not laugh?

"And the funny part of it is that the mate thinks he could get her off. That little guy knows his stuff if—" Shep let his voice sag off.

"If what?" they cried. "What's the matter with you, kid? Talk up!"

"If he could count on you guys taking a chance—a chance the old man himself would never face."

"What are we waitin' for?" roared Joe Silva. "Let's show the—do we stay here because a couple of guys are guarding us?"

"There's nobody guarding you," Shep Wick said. "The mate's pulled the third and the bo'sun off guard to help him try to float her."

With a yell they rushed toward the door. But Shep was there before them. "Come out like you were going to watch!" he counseled. "Show that old buzzard it takes more than a hurricane to get your goat!"

The unhopeful Mr. Michaels, after sounding the wells, had climbed up on the spray-drenched, slanting forecastle

head with the third mate. For an instant he surveyed the orderly little file of men down on the well deck. His face expressed no surprise but he gulped hard before he raised his voice in a command:

"Up here, a couple of you! The rest go aft and swing out that starboard boat. I'm laying out an anchor to kedge her nose off, Mr. Palmer!"

Though the cresting, ragged gray seas alongside were no water in which to juggle with bower anchors the men moved at a trot toward the boat around which the fight had swirled. Captain Tenby, in the wing of the bridge, with his right hand in his coat pocket, was watching the mounting blackness in the east. He caught a leer or two and a flash of teeth from the crowd but ignored it all.

His aloofness conveyed that it was the mate's job to get her off.

"Scared so he can't move!" a fellow in the port watch declared. "I seen 'em that way before—paralaxed, they calls it."

"He won't give us no trouble," Joe Silva asserted.

In the rear of the bunch Shep grabbed Sam Aborn by the neck and spoke privately in his ear.

"I'm just waiting for you to open that mouth to them, Sam," he said. "I got a handspike I think will just fit in your gullet."

"You're enough of a seaman to know that it isn't possible—"

Snarling, speeded by a kick, Aborn closed his mouth and followed the others.

THERE was hell and to spare in the next short hour. A hand crushed between lifeboat and steel plates and a skull cracked by a whipping block on the davit falls were just incidents in the operations.

Mr. Michaels led the forlorn hope, not dramatically or dashingly, but with painful thought. It takes thought, rather than drama or dash to lower a massive anchor over the bow and suspend it on a stout spar lashed between two leaping boats, neither one of which is capable alone of sustaining its weight and the weight of many shots of chain. It is a matter of engineering, of human brain as well as of human guts.

Mr. Michaels, hanging over the bow, with oil bags streaming down the stem and suspended over a spar projecting forward like a bowsprit, supplied the brains. And the crew of the ship, black gang and deck alike, fending off their two eggshells from the steel plates, tending the lashings of the spar linking them, piling chain and dodging death, supplied the guts.

They supplied plenty. Men are like that, even men who, a few minutes before, had rushed the boats. Shep did his share in one of the boats and found himself unable to do more, for his shipmates were on fire to surpass the possible in human strength and endurance.

They rarely had a chance to turn their heads toward that mounting, tremendous black pall that held the storm wind; and when they did they paid its threat of death no heed.

They were not heroes, saving their ship. They were men, showing another man they hated that they were better men than he. They looked triumphantly at him, up on the bridge, more often than they should have, but men are like that, too.

They worked like lost souls breaching the walls of hell on that attempt to get the anchor slung between the boats. And like lost souls they got nothing for their pains. Gallantry is no sure master over the mighty sea.

For an instant a sudden, harder gust of wind drove aft the oil film spread around the ship's stem. A sea leaped at the bows and broke in a thundering smother of foam. One of the lifeboats was carried with a crash against the

steel plates of the *Elizabeth Harrod's* side. The boat's side crumpled up; the sea filled it and the bower anchor, shifting on the spar, carried it under with remorseless weight.

The men in her, warned by yells, escaped. Some swarmed up the side of the ship on lifelines dangling for that purpose. The rest crawled into the other lifeboat alongside. The men in her slashed away the lashings of the spar that joined them to anchor and crushed boat.

Shep Wick, dripping with sweat and sea water, came up a lifeline, hand over hand. He found Mr. Michaels, elbows on the rail, looking down at the water, oil-filmed once more, into which the anchor and some shots of chain had vanished. Already the anchor windlass was grinding in the chain.

But Mr. Michaels gave no orders. He had lost a boat. What is theoretically possible with two boats is hopeless with one.

Shep looked around at the livid sky and the racing waves. Still remorselessly, the wind was increasing. He stared aft, toward deeper water. His searching eyes fell, then focused sharply, upon an intermittent flurry of foam. There, the running seas were slashed to pieces by an obstruction that set their might at naught, as a man might restrain the tantrums of an angry child.

Shep did not stare overlong at those spouting seas. He jumped toward Mr. Michaels.

"A coral head two points abaft the starboard beam, sir!" he cried. "Just awash—and shaped sort of like a man's fist!"

"There'll be plenty of those hereabouts," muttered the mate. "We're not under way so—"

He stopped, shocked back into thought by Shep Wick's blazing, excited eyes. He turned and watched, waiting for a wave to sweep over. He stared intently at the streaming gray rock that showed in the next trough. He smote his leg.

"Shaped like a man's first!" he cried. "We might—we might—by God!"

"Yes, sir," said Shep. "By God," he added, soberly enough.

The mate did not hear him. Already he was ordering the remaining lifeboat to sheer away from the tangle of failure at the bow and ride to a line aft, clear of danger and still protected by oil.

His preparations did not take long. He ordered a stout wire hawser flaked down in the sternsheets of the boat. He ordered out of the boat the men who seemed most exhausted and in their places sent men with muscles like rocks. Then he swung down the painter into the boat himself, with Shep Wick and long-armed Gus Schenk close behind him.

They pushed off, out of the protecting oil slick. The wind hit the high bow. They rowed like furies into it just to hold their own. Then, in every slightest lull, they crabbed slowly in the direction of the jagged peak of coral that broke the waves. Mr. Michaels handled the long steering oar. He wasted no breath on exhortations. His head gave them the beat. Back on the ship they paid out wire until the drag was too great for the oarsmen. Then Shep and Gus Schenk, stepping gingerly among the treacherous coils of wire, paid it out from the boat.

Though the coral head was no great distance from the ship and a couple of points to leeward, the men were nearly spent and the boat in grave danger of dropping down wind before they had fought half the way. It was then that Mr. Michaels replaced two gasping, failing oarsmen with Shep and Gus Schenk.

The wind, still rising with deliberate, unfaltering power, and the sea, broken though it was by the reefs among which the ship had blundered in the murk, were daunting things to Shep. For now the dark sullenness in the east was giv-

ing way to sable fury. The black, collected mass of the hurricane cloud, ragged, terrible in its might, seemed now to hurry to its attack, after pursuing erratically for a long forty-eight hours. This was no squall, this hurricane, to come and go like a summer shower and, at last, it was closing in on them. The inner circles of that vast, whirling system of winds were about to come.

Away from the ship, in this tiny lifeboat, they could see with dreadful plainness the approaching doom.

But they had a job to do, these men, and the job was their defense against terror.

For Shep Wick the hurricane and the world vanished. The nearest thing to him was the handle of that heartbreaking oar; the furthest thing, Mr. Michaels, at his long steering oar. Shep burned up body and soul in keeping that ashen blade swinging, straining against white cresting water and gray sullen troughs.

They rowed like giants and they rowed forever.

Not forever. There came a time, after the boat had leaped and dived tremendously with sheets of spray slashing at the men, when Mr. Michaels, hand cupped, roared in a frantic voice:

"Way enough!"

Shep Wick, pausing incredulously, sank helplessly over on the oar that a moment before he had swung through the sea. Vaguely he saw that Mr. Michaels and the two men beside him in the sternsheets were struggling with the wire hawser, shackling it to itself.

Looking up, he realized that they had circled that spouting, sea-cleaving lump of coral. They had escaped the reef waiting under the heaving water to stave them in; they had drawn around the head a thread of steel, linking it to the ship. That wire was under water; it might hold or slip; they could not tell. But, made fast to that hawser by a Manila line, they might rest now; rest in the frowning face of eternity—but rest!

Rest they did. And then, with caution and with travail, clinging to the hawser, they worked the boat back to the ship's side. The wind was screaming at them, now; perversely it flattened out the choppy sea that it had raised; stamped the waves down in a fury. It was well they did not have to row against that gale to reach her!

They let the boat tail out astern of the ship and scrambled up a rope ladder slung over the counter. Shep fought his way against the wind with Mr. Michaels forward to where the other mates and some men had got the ship's end of the wire around a capstan. They crouched close to the deck and the wind clawed at them.

A sound, not the sound of the wind ripping through the rigging but a sound from the blackness overhead, a sound detached from earth, the infernal cry of the hurricane, rang in their ears. It had caught them now. The ship, that had seemed so dead, stirred to the iron strength of that blast. Trembling she leaned over a little more, heeled toward the port side. It was on that side, as she swung, that she had taken the ground. And now the hurricane, with hideous pressure, was jamming her further on the reef.

"We'll try our luck!" Shep Wick shouted to himself.

Mr. Michaels was heaving in, taking up the slack on that tenuous rope of steel that stretched from the coral head to the ship. As the capstan turned, its clatter and hissing unheard in that snarling rush of air, the wire came up out of the streaked and level sea. It rose up until almost its full length showed above the water. But still the bow of the ship lay firmly held just as it had swung onto the reef. The roaring wind, not quite dead ahead, opposed that steel wire and pressed the bow on harder.

Mr. Michaels glanced at Shep. There

was a question in that glance—a professional question—and Shep read it aright.

"Wouldn't say the wind was shifting either way, sir," he shouted in the mate's ear. "Hitting us about a point on the starboard bow, sir. I'll watch."

Mr. Michaels signaled to cease hauling in. With dropping jaws the men stared at him. 'Vast heaving now? Now, when—

His order was obeyed with sullen reluctance. The windlass was stilled.

"He knows his hawser—and his stresses," Shep applauded.

The straining wire held against the glancing impact of the gale.

"If it goes around east'ard we're done," roared Mr. Michaels, as if to another officer. "Once the sea gets up again after this—"

His stubby hand expressed a roll to port and nothingness. Shep nodded.

Mr. Michaels watched his taut wire. No hawser would take more strain than he was giving this one now.

Shep watched the wind and the white streaks on the water. The hurricane sang its song of death and destruction. Minutes passed in the quivering ship.

Shep Wick grabbed at the mate's tense arm.

"Veering, sir!" he shrieked. "Veering to westward! Wind dead ahead!"

Mr. Michael's right arm was churning in quick signal. The capstan shuddered into life.

The wind was a blast from dead ahead. It was as if this stolid grounded ship were flying through space at the speed of a projectile.

The capstan shuddered on. The wire rose higher. And then, of a sudden, with a vibration that seemed like an audible groan, the ship straightened up and, with capstan revolving jerkily, heeled to starboard.

It was not the wire that had done it, but the shifting wind. The wire then had added its mite. And now the capstan, taking up the hawser's slack, was working with that furious wind, not against it. The ship heeled further.

Of a sudden, with a grating that went through every man's feet up into his brain, she slid off the ground. She was afloat!

Shep looked up at Captain Tenby, forgotten on the bridge. The master was at the engine telegraph, shoving the pointer to full astern. Deeper water lay there—though it was still the shoal and treacherous water of Campeche Bank.

They held the wire that had saved them until the ship, jarring at full astern, drew the last few fathoms of it around the capstan and into the sea.

Shep Wick, crouching on the forecastle head, watched the hawser whip into the gray water with unreasonable misgivings.

The *Elizabeth Harrod* was heeling again, but this time it was from the pressure of the wind alone, as Tenby, still in the poor shelter of the flat cay and the reef on which she had blundered, got her around and going ahead, to southward for more room against another shift of wind.

"We'll catch hell," Shep Wick predicted, gazing out over the welter of water, with the wrath of the hurricane terrible in his ears.

Mr. Michaels punched him with a hearty fist.

"Don't worry!" he shouted. "If you're mutineers"— he stabbed downward at the forecastle under them and then up at the bridge—"*he's* had a mutiny. Owners don't like mutinies, young fellow. *He* won't have had one—and you'll get your ticket."

Shep's streaming face curled up into a grin. That Mr. Michaels could think of that puny incident in the midst of this paroxysm of the world was reassuring.

"Everybody stand by up on the lower bridge!" Michaels roared. "Pass the

word! We'll be taking solid water when the wind eases!"

SOLID water they took and plenty of it when the bank turned into a mad maelstrom of leaping seas as the windless center of the hurricane cut past them. But that let-up of the gale saved them from disaster on the coast. More hell they caught when the wind roared up again out of the south and flattened the seas. They played a breathless game with Alert Patch and Granville Shoal but their luck and hatch covers held.

With swept decks and broken bones, with a winch torn off the forecastle head and embedded in the well deck and without a boat they crawled toward the open roadstead of Progreso when the sea permitted.

Captain Tenby had called them heroes, although not under his breath; and they had cheered him, although not under their breaths. Nobody mentioned mutiny.

Shep Wick, by the rail, was straightening out once more the difference between seagoing textbooks and life.

"Here I use men's hate of their skipper to get them back their nerve," he muttered. "The mate uses the pressure of a hurricane to float a stranded ship. And a coral head that gives you a chill to look at serves us better than a bower anchor. What does that add up to?"

Mild Mr. Michaels, moving toward his station on the forecastle head to let go the anchor, paused an instant.

"It takes more than a ticket, Wick," he said quietly. His eyes turned meaningly to the master, stumping the bridge and to Sam Aborn slumped on the forward hatch. Then, sadly, he touched his chest. "Most of us have tickets but—" He shrugged his shoulders. "Remember when you get your first command," he added and passed on.

Commander
Edward Ellsberg,
U. S. N. R.

SUNKEN TREASURE

SUNKEN TREASURE!

There is a lure in those words that is older than history, that has dragged men to the ends of the earth and to the depths of the sea; a lure that has broken the health of many adventurers, cost the lives of unnumbered divers, and stripped the last copper from the purses of countless thousands who have put up the cash for Heaven knows how many salvage expeditions down through the ages. On any sane accounting system, salvage is badly in the red: the money that literally has been sunk in salvage schemes far exceeds the treasures recovered.

And yet the game goes on, the alluring circulars go out, the supposed new marvels of science are dangled before the eyes of prospective investors as guaranteed to bring up from the bottom of the sea untold fortunes. Each year a new crop of marvels, or the old ones refurbished into 1935 streamlined models, decorate the letterheads of the promoters. And each year the returns to the investors are just about what they were the year before—nil.

The reason for this unsatisfactory state of treasure hunting at sea (and perhaps ashore) is that the treasure is usually non-existent. The big difficulty in salvage work at sea, is not in providing the technical equipment with which a job can reasonably be done, (though the uninitiated think that the case) but in

finding a sunken ship that is worth working on. Poets mainly are responsible for the legend that the bottoms of the seas are strewn with gems and plastered with pieces of eight. The hard facts are otherwise. If the gold is actually there in quantities large enough to warrant a serious effort at recovery, rest assured the effort is now being made. But you will never be offered a chance to buy stock in the expedition.

Sifting fact from fiction is far more important to prospective treasure hunters than searching out new and fantastic gadgets for exploring the ocean depths. To the uninitiated, every wreck is laden with untold wealth, and the older the wreck is and the deeper she lies, the greater her treasure is sure to be.

A little intelligence in this matter is worth while. Never in the history of the world have such huge gold shipments across the seas taken place, as have occurred in the relatively few years since Britain went off the gold standard. Shipments have run as high as $50,000,000 in one vessel; shipments of from $5,000,000 to $20,000,000 have been common. Over $800,000,000 crossed in nine months; and the total shipped across the North Atlantic in the last few years would make even the palmiest days of the galleons on the Spanish Main look trifling. There have been fortunately no losses by shipwreck, but does any one think that, should one of the treasure-laden ships be sunk, the slightest doubt would exist in the minds of the owners or the underwriters as to what the ship was really carrying in the way of unusually valuable cargo? This knowledge, the first essential in any salvage expedition, is available for all modern wrecks, and a reasonable amount of research will disclose equivalent data on older catastrophies. And yet in the case of practically every vessel which forms the object of the efforts of the average salvage promoter of the present day, nothing authentic can be shown proving that the ship carried anything resembling her supposed treasure.

The *Lusitania* is a case in point. Probably no modern or ancient ship is better known, and her tragic end during the World War was unquestionably one of the factors which ultimately dragged America into the war. The *Lusitania*, sailing from New York with the eyes of the world upon her, had not the slightest chance of concealing anything in her cargo, even had her owners so desired. She sailed, and unfortunately for her passengers, she was sunk on May 7, 1915, by a German torpedo off the south coast of Ireland.

While there had been nothing secret about the *Lusitania* or her movements up to the moment she disappeared beneath the waves, immediately thereafter she became enmeshed in a cloud of legends. Those that had to do with reported violations of her character as an unarmed passenger vessel were thoroughly investigated by the United States Government and shown to be false; the propagator of at least one of the stories of her carrying artillery was convicted of perjury and sentenced to prison. But neither this government nor that of Great Britain has bothered to go to similar lengths with the equally imaginative stories of treasure on the *Lusitania*.

In spite of the absurdity of such a yarn, treasure hunting expeditions on the *Lusitania's* hulk have tried to raise money from the public both here and in England. Here is a vessel which has been sunk hardly twenty years; a vessel which the owners, the underwriters, and the British Government all deny carried any appreciable amount of gold; a vessel whose position as she lies on the bottom is known with considerable accuracy and on which, in two hundred and forty feet of water, salvage work could be done if it was warranted. Not a stroke of salvage work has ever been attempted by the owners, thus proving the sincerity of those in the best position to know

that there is nothing aboard worth salvaging. But the *Lusitania* is still a usable bait for promoters with novel salvage gadgets and a well-founded faith in the ability of the public to swallow any yarn. Even if one wants to believe that the *Lusitania's* manifest, showing only $20,350 in silver and precious stones out of a total cargo value of $735,000, was falsely sworn to (although the munitions she carried were all listed in great detail and openly) ; that then and now, the British Government for war reasons is trying to conceal the facts surrounding the sinking and has therefore discouraged salvage work;—still, slight investigation into the circumstances will show the improbability of any large amount of gold aboard.

For a short time after the war broke out in 1914, gold flowed from the United States to Britain as the English started to call home their credit balances in this country, but before long, the flow, both of credit and of gold, was reversed. Huge shipments of munitions and of food and cotton to the Allies had to be paid for in this country. The flow of gold and of securities was westward. Unfortunately for the *Lusitania* treasure legend, she was *eastward* bound when the U-20's torpedo sent her to the bottom.

S. S. MERIDA is another example of how fast legend grows around a wreck. The *Merida*, bound from Vera Cruz to New York, in collision off the Virginia capes, sank in approximately two hundred feet of water, on May 12, 1911. The vessel was a total loss, but most of the passengers and crew were rescued by the ship which sank her. Under ordinary circumstances, the *Merida* would simply have joined the roll of other wrecks, but the circumstances of the *Merida's* sailing had not been ordinary.

Conditions were disturbed in Mexico. Porfirio Diaz, who for years had ruled the nation, had fled to Europe. For almost the succeeding decade, Mexico was torn by strife as various leaders struggled for ascendency in the state. Political refugees were common along the American side of the Mexican border and in New York. They had as their outstanding characteristics the twin facts that they were against the Mexican government of the moment, and that they were broke.

Under such conditions, the *Merida* sailed from Vera Cruz, carrying the usual quota of refugees, some destined on arrival in New York to sponge off their compatriots and any others with a few dollars to give in exchange for the somewhat threadbare tales of how their vast *haciendas* had been confiscated and they reduced to beggary. But chance gave the *Merida* refugees a far better story. At sea, their ship was lost; they landed as shipwrecked mariners who had lost their all at sea.

And what an all it finally turned out to be! The crown jewels of the Emperor Maximilian and the Empress Carlotta, the treasury of Madero, the wealth of Mexico in gold and silver—all these and more were traveling in the baggage of fleeing emigrés on the *Merida*. Undeclared, of course uninsured, secretly packed to avoid seizure by the Mexican agents in Vera Cruz. Odd, that the refugees on previous and on following ships, had managed to escape only with their lives and were thankful for a dime for a cup of coffee, while their compatriots on the *Merida*, had it not been for an unfortunate accident at sea, would have landed with the wherewithal not only to outshine Solomon in all his glory, but to finance a revolution in Mexico which would have restored every fugitive to his lost *hacienda*. On the strength of that sad tale, undoubtedly many a sympathetic listener loosened up.

What are the facts about the *Merida's* cargo? The underwriters thought so little of the matter that they paid the loss on the vessel and the insured cargo and

never spent a dollar then or since, in any effort at salvage. There was nothing aboard worth salvaging that they knew about except a moderate quantity, less than $250,000, of silver bullion. As prudent business men, they did not figure that the cost of salvaging that silver was warranted by the recoverable value. So far as the millions in gold and jewels were concerned, they assessed those legends as moonshine, and proceeded to forget the *Merida*.

But others with more romance in their souls did not. A few years passed by, enough to give to the stories about the *Merida* the proper mellowing. A syndicate was formed of a few wealthy men in New York and Philadelphia, to whom the cost meant little but romance bulked large. In the most approved style they hired some divers, outfitted a salvage vessel, and proceeded to salvage the *Merida's* treasure.

What went on has never been given much publicity. The divers, who are supposed to have found the wreck and to have worked on it, have very little to say. At considerable expense, the expedition worked off the Virginia Capes for two seasons and recovered nothing of value. At the end of this period, the wealthy syndicate members having acquired a sufficient amount of romance to last them for the rest of their lives (and perhaps having begun vaguely to fear that they, instead of the *Merida*, were the treasure vessel) refused to put up any more cash, and the first treasure hunt over the *Merida* came to a close.

Since then, the *Merida* has been included in the portfolio of practically every American promoter of salvage devices. From their prospectuses, the *Merida's* treasure is about to be salvaged each summer (as soon as the promoters have sold a little more stock) by all sorts of odd gadgets, strongly reminiscent of Rube Goldberg's best efforts in the field of invention. To the accompaniment of lurid newspaper stories, salvage expeditions have battled for the privilege of working over the wreck and exploiting their pet contraptions, but the net effects to date have been the death of one diver and the expenditure of more cash without any returns to the investors.

Real salvage work is slow, terribly expensive, and even under the best circumstances, uncertain of success—unless those in charge are unusually competent and strongly backed financially. Careful consideration will show that these essential characteristics aren't likely to be found in the treasure promotions offered the public. The combination is probably never brought together except where the existence of really valuable salvage is not a matter of legend but of definitely verifiable fact. In such cases, which are, of course, rare, regardless of the difficulty, the salvage job is usually undertaken by the owners, and strange as it may seem, is usually also successful. Of this class are the salvage efforts in our time on the *Laurentic* and on the *Egypt*.

S.S. LAURENTIC is probably the outstanding case in history of large authentic recovery of treasure. In January, 1917, the *Laurentic*, a 15,000-ton White Star liner, being operated by the British Navy as an auxiliary cruiser, sailed from England with $25,000,000 aboard, mainly in bullion, consigned to the United States in payment of munitions. Her course led her through the Irish Sea and around the north coast of Ireland, where, off the mouth of Lough Swilly, she ran on a mine and sank with the loss of about three-quarters of her crew.

The British Government, shaken by the huge loss, immediately and in spite of the fact that a war was going on, commenced to sweep for the wreck and soon located it in one hundred and twenty feet of water. Salvage operations were in charge of Commander Damant of the Royal Navy, one of the world's outstanding diving experts. The job

under him was undertaken by the British Navy. Wholly aside from its intrinsic value, the recovery of that gold was of vast military importance to the British.

Aided somewhat by luck, the divers cleared away the passage leading below to the strongroom, and in short order, several boxes of gold were recovered and it began to appear that the task was to be easy.

But as usually happens, at this point the ocean took a hand. A bad gale chased the salvagers away; when several days later, they were able to moor again and start work once more, they found that the upper decks had collapsed, and their passage no longer was open. Once more at great risk they broke a way through to the treasure room, only to find that the floor of the strongroom had given way and the gold had disappeared.

This was a bitter blow and all chance of quick salvage faded. But there were compensations: America came into the war, and Britain's need to pay cash for supplies in this country vanished. With that off her mind, the British Navy withdrew its divers and used them until the war ended in investigating sunken German submarines and in other salvage work on damaged vessels.

Nothing was done therefore in 1918, but the year 1919 found the salvagers back in full force. Tides and storms had further damaged the hull and filled her with silt; a desperate battle with the currents and the mud yielded the divers $2,500,000 for their season's work. 1920 opened, and the divers returned when the winter gales abated to find the treasure buried beneath a maze of broken steel plates, frames, and longitudinals. Three hundred tons of steel had to be blasted away and torn out of the hulk, before the gold was again exposed. Some of the bars were recovered, when once more a gale collapsed more wreckage in the hold and the coming of autumn put an end to the work. 1921 found the wreckers at work on a hulk which bore little resemblance to a ship. More blasting, more struggles with the silt, the currents, the storms on the surface, and the weary years dragged on through 1922, 1923, and 1924 before the divers had finally grubbed out of the sand at the ocean bottom, most of the lost ingots, and $24,800,000 was retrieved.

Seven years work, all the resources of the British Navy in men and equipment, and $640,000 in cost went into this job. Undertaken as a private venture, the cost would have been far higher. And it was an efficiently run job. No lives were lost in spite of terrible diving conditions, which would have taken the average salvage promoter and his intricate gadgets and made flotsam out of them in short order.

But as usual, the regular crop of legends about the *Laurentic* is propagated by the salvage circulars, one of which publishes the "fact" that in one season alone on the *Laurentic* salvage, over 60 lives were lost! (All of which, you are told to believe, would have been avoided if only their apparatus had been used on the job.)

The job on the *Egypt* stands unique in salvage history for the depth at which the work had to be done. It also illustrates nearly everything else concerning salvage, including the fact that when there is real gold to be recovered, the public is not invited to participate.

S.S. Egypt, a P. & O. liner bound from London to Bombay with bullion valued at £1,054,000 (about $5,270,000) was sunk by collision during a fog, some thirty miles off Ushant in May, 1922. The water in that vicinity is approximately four hundred feet deep. Lloyds' paid the loss in full, and acquired, thereby, ownership of the wreck. There never was any question in the minds of those behind the salvage job exactly what the stakes they were to play for were.

The job of locating the hulk and of designing practicable means of working

at the depth, was given to certain British engineers. Before they had got very far with the task, they recommended turning the job over to an Italian firm which had already demonstrated its competence in work in the Mediterranean at depths over two hundred feet. So to the Sorima Company of Genoa went the contract for the salvage work on the *Egypt*. Sorima was managed by Commendatore Giovanni Quaglia, its founder and principal owner, the company being an offshoot of his success in building and operating a line of Italian oil tankers.

And promptly with the acquiring of that contract, Quaglia's troubles started. He had first to find the wreck. In the seven years that had elapsed since the sinking, two previous expeditions under Lloyds' had been unable to locate her. In the early summer of 1929, acting on best data available, the Italians started their search, and it is a sobering thing to contemplate, that in spite of the use of every known scientific aid, two years went by before they located the wreck.

The uncertainties and the cost of this part of the job alone, would have finished an ordinary salvage company. Having finally found his wreck, it was too late in the year for any work. Quaglia's vessels had to await 1931 before actually starting operations on the *Egypt*. Through that season they struggled, blasting away the superstructure and the upper decks.

The work was dishearteningly slow. Their metal diving suits proved practically useless when it came to doing any *work* on the bottom. They were abandoned, diving in the usual sense was given up. A man, cased in a cylindrical shell from which he could see, but in which he was as helpless as a mummy in a mummy-case, acted from then on as an observer for those on the surface. They fished with grabs from the surface, laid out explosive charges, operated clamshell buckets, and tore the *Egypt* apart. The diving season of 1931 came to an end. Three years' work, and not a cent of recovery. So far Sorima had spent $400,000.

But the certainty that the gold was there kept them going. 1932 came, the fourth year of work began. Months more of grappling in the depths, of firing explosives, of tearing out broken steel plates, and at last the roof of the bullion room, several decks down, was removed. Special orange-peel buckets were now used and finally gold bars and golden sovereigns began to litter the *Artiglio's* deck. Much of the treasure was removed that year, most of the remainder the year following, and the salvage work on the *Egypt* was over. Five years' work, unexpected difficulties which in this brief space cannot be even touched on, and then success due to excellent seamanship in working from the surface with simple engineering contrivances guided by an observer in the depths. These constitute the story of the *Egypt*. There is little in it to encourage speculation in salvage companies whose main talking point is some freakish rig for working in the deep sea.

Only the person who has been there, realizes the heartbreaks that await the salvager. Hulks, even when their positions are fairly well known, are difficult to find; in constricted waters, with many old hulks around, identification may well be impossible. And when found, the one thing the salvager can be sure of is that his wreck will present new and unimagined troubles to baffle his efforts, use up his precious diving time, and eat up his capital at a fearful rate.

Happy—and rare—the salvager who *knows* that if the wreck cracks before he does, the gold really waits him inside the hulk.

THE CAMP-FIRE

The meeting place of readers, writers and adventurers

TALL tales grow to higher heights up in his country, writes James W. Edgar, of Bayside, Halifax County, Nova Scotia, sending along this poem, "I Wish't I Was One to Lie."

Down in this Province, the home of deep-water fishermen, tall tales of the sea are the rule rather than the exception. There is, however, one old fellow in this village who is in a class by himself when it comes to spinning yarns. He tells stories of mermaids he has seen, even describing the color of their eyes and his idea of their weight, of sponges that they had to cut adrift from their vessel to save her from being swamped, of ships that were stopped by unseen forces in mid-ocean while some spirit of the night conversed with the crew, he tells of hauling in lines and nets with different colored brushes on them and of fish that use their fins for sails, furling them on a stormy day and having them all set in fine weather. All of these yarns he avers are the absolute truth, as he says he cannot tell a lie although he wishes many a time he could. On top of all this he described a storm he was in at sea, in his younger days and as I think it is the prize package of them all I have set it down in rhyme.

I Wish't I Was One to Lie

I stood one day by the breezy bay
Watching the ships sail by,
When an old tar said with a shake of his head,
I wish't I was one to lie.

I've seen some sights as would jigger your lights,
And they jiggered my own forsooth,
But I ain't worth a darn at spinning a yarn
That wanders away from the truth.

We went out on the bark the Nancy Stark,
Just a couple of leagues to sea,
When Captain Snook with a troubled look,
He comes and he says to me:

"Bosun Smith, make haste forthwith
And hemstitch the spanker sail,
And accordion pleat the for'd sheet,
For she's going to blow a gale."

I straightway did what the captain bid,
And just as the job was through,
The north wind, crack, took us dead aback
And, murdering lights, how she blew!

She blew the tars right off the spars,
The spars right off the masts,
Anchors and sails, and kegs of nails,
Went by on the wings of the blast.

Our galley shook, as she blew the cook
Right out through the starboard glim,
And pots and pans and kettles and cans
Went clattering after him.

She blew the fire out of the stove,
The coal right out of the bin,
Then she whistled apace past the captain's face
And blew all the hair off his chin.

"Wiggle me dead!" the captain said,
And them words blew out of his mouth,
"We're lost, I fear, if the wind don't veer
And blow awhile from the south."

Wiggle me dead, no sooner he'd said
Them words that blew out of his mouth
Than the wind hauled round with a hurricane sound
And blew right in from the south.

We opened our eyes in wild surprise,
But never a word did we say,
For in changing her tack, the wind blew back
The things she blew away.

She blowed the tars back on the spars,
The spars back on the masts,

The anchors, sails, and kegs of nails,
Which into the ship stuck fast.

And afore we could look, she blew the cook
Right under the galley poop
And back came the kettles, pots and pans,
Without even spilling the soup.

She blew the fire back in the stove
Where it burned in its regular place,
And all of us cheered when she blew the beard
Right back on the captain's face.

There's more of my tale, said the sailor hale,
As would jigger your lights forsooth,
But I ain't worth a darn at spinning a yarn
That wanders away from the truth.

PAUL B. STILLMAN, of Glendale, California, recently asked the Camp-Fire circle if any one knew about the mysterious fish called grunion. Along came responses from A. F. Hebding, of Long Beach, California; Henry M. Van Depoele, of Lynn, Massachusetts; Jack Gordon, of San Francisco; W. H. Jackson, of Riverside, and Ross Young, of Caliva City, California; all of them telling of "grunion runs" they have witnessed.

Mr. Van Depoele tells of a night at Long Beach:

We sat out in front of the house and smoked. There seemed to be a particularly bright sparkle to the water. Not phosphorescence. It seemed to be alive, and by cripes, it was. Alive with millions of little fish, little silver, sparkling, leaping fish. They became more and more in evidence as the tide approached the high-water mark.

Now the neighbors began to appear on the beach with buckets and nets of all kinds. My friend went into the garage and came out with a big scoop shaped like a Fresno Scraper but with a bottom made of half-inch hardware cloth. The scoop was so wide that I could just about span the handles.

As the water just about reached its highest the fish, in millions, squirmed and flipped over one another, following each little ripple to its very highest mark, then receding with it.

With my pants rolled up, I backed out into the water, holding the scoop up above the water. When I got out far enough I would wait for a wave to pass me and as it started to recede would drop the scoop so that the receding wave would wash the fish into it. Now Russ would grab the front end of the scoop and together we would run out of the water and dump the fish into a big wash tub. In surprisingly few trips the tub was full.

Cars had stopped to see what was going on. In no time hundreds of people, many with all their clothes on, were gamboling about in the surf, yelling and whooping and catching fish in auto buckets, hats and even bare hands.

As quickly as the run started it stopped. In about two weeks there was another run.

Some people do not clean these fish. We did. We fried them in deep fat and all I can say is that they were worth eating. None of the tubful was wasted.

Mr. Gordon says "the grunion, or smelt as it is called around San Diego, is about six inches long, silvery, and seems transparent. It resembles closely the Columbia River smelt." He advises fires, or auto headlights shining on the water, and tells this one:

There is still another method of catching them which I saw in operation. One man had a flashlight, a sack, and a fox terrier. That dog could catch more fish than anybody on the beach.

Mr. Young says that in northern California the grunion are known as surf fish; and sold in the markets as silver smelts. Indians smoke them for winter food, and he's seen an Indian scoop up three hundred pounds on one "run."

I asked an Indian to sell me "two bits" worth. He asked: "How many men eat um?" I told him two. He gave me about fifty fish, averaging about eight inches long. It seemed a lot for two men, but my partner and I ate them all at one "sitting." They are without doubt the best salt water fish I ever ate.

Other letters also describe these runs, but Mr. Hebding remarks that grunion have become very scarce in the last six years, and because "runs" are not what they were, the use of nets has been discouraged.

IT isn't a derringer but a deringer, says T. B. Beatty, Jr., of Newtown, Pennsylvania, who knows the family of the inventor.

I noticed an inquiry in a recent issue of Adventure concerning the Deringer pistols. A friend of mine is married to the granddaughter of Henry Deringer, and tells me that the name was always spelled with only one "R". Bret Harte and other Western writers used two "r's," but how it came about, no one knows.

Besides the famous pistol which he invented, Deringer also made muskets, dueling pistols and, I believe, sporting arms. I used to own a Deringer musket. Bannerman's catalog contains a page of U. S. Military Small Arms which illustrates a musket of this type (No. 4) with the extended triggerguard and oval steel patch box in the stock, so Deringer must have made these by contract with the U. S. Government.

As a matter of general interest, I might add that in his later years Henry Deringer gave away all the guns that he had kept, so that at his death only one remained. I saw it the other day, and it's not in very good condition, but it is one of the first of the famous Deringer pistols, and he had kept it as a memento.

RECENT discussion at the Camp-Fire about the importance of the Hudson's Bay Company in the development of Canada brings us these remarks by S. J. Gothard, editor of *The Canadian Police Gazette*, of Vancouver, British Columbia:

I have read with a good deal of interest the argument of one of your readers from Winnipeg and Samuel Alexander White, of Toronto.

Now I have been at certain places in this Province—which the writer from Winnipeg evidently has not visited. I have been at different points where the H. B. C. hangs out, and the places where they are always referred to as "posts." For instance, the "Liard Post of the Hudson's Bay," the "Porter's Landing Post" and so on ad lib. This is, of course, in B. C., that I am talking about. You can't get away from the "Hudson's Bay post" and if the Winnipeg writer ever talked to a trapper or hunter or miner he would find out that they always refer to these places as "Hudson's Bay posts." You can't get away from them if you are in the wilderness.

Another thing: Did the Winnipeg man ever see the first barge of the spring (always referred to as the Hudson's bay barge) visit any of the posts? Well, I did, and I can tell him that the old-day ceremony is still kept up. The gun is fired, the H. B. C. flag is hoisted, and the attendant ceremonies are carried out. The captain of that boat (an Indian) is more important than the captain of an Oriental liner, and certainly carries more authority. And has he ever seen witchcraft practised? And does he know that right today the only thing that the H. B. posts resent is the white man who comes into the country, they preferring to deal solely with the Indians? And does he know that in the arctic the H. B. C. is supreme? If he doesn't, he should read his Canadian history, and then he would find out what made Canada—the Hudson's Bay Co. and the Scottish race. The company does very little advertising of the wilderness, because it wants to be left alone there, where it is the Head Tyee of everything.

Today the Hudson's Bay Co. is very much alive in the wildwood and are adding every day to their posts (at least in British Columbia) whenever occasion demands, as there is a possibility of some free trader trying to corral some territory which they, rightly or wrongly, believe belong to them.

DIVINING rods work and no doubt of it, according to Thomas J. Johnston, of New York City. He's seen the "pull" of underground water snap the fork.

With all respect for Vic Shaw, his forceful English is misdirected. While I share his skepticism about locating metals (save with the induction balance, quite another device), I have seen a Negro who, beyond a peradventure, could and did locate water. Coincidence could not explain a dozen cases.

I have seen the single end of the fork broken off above the hands. No possible strain by the dowser could do it. Laugh that off.

I DON'T want to turn our Camp-Fire entirely into a bear-and-dog discussion, but two more letters came along from California that should be published. Capt. F. J. Franklin, *Ask Adventure* expert, of Santa Susana, and Dr. C. H. Cummings, of San Francisco, tell personal experiences. Let it never be doubted again that bears and dogs can't be turned into good buddies.

Captain Franklin writes:

For over twenty years, I have been associated with Adventure Magazine. I seldom inflict myself upon the readers of the Camp-Fire page, but I'll shoot my story of a dog and a bear. To this day I wear the same Sam Brown belt that bears the teeth marks of said bear I'm a-telling about. In 1918 I was in Arctic North Russia. For my sins I was appointed O. C. Remounts to the whole of our force and my "Remounts" consisted chiefly of reindeer. I refer to the Syren force consisting of an allied army of Americans, British, Italians, French and Serbians who spent two years in Arctic North Russia fighting the Bolsheviks with little success. Syren was the code word for our combined forces and the word was coined so that the general publics of the nations involved, excepting the postal authorities, knew not of our exact whereabouts.

Sir Ernest Shackleton on one of his reconnoitering trips by sledge over the White Sea towards Archangel brought me back a dog. The dog seemed half wolf and was extremely vicious. My army rank at that time was that of a Major, and "Kem," as I named the dog, took a great delight in endeavoring to bite the pants of Colonels and Generals who visited my Kaplouska, which was an abandoned box car on a blown up railroad (Murmansk to St. Petersburg, now Petrograd). Kem is a little fishing village on the shores of the White Sea. Then a section of the British Royal Air Force arrived on our shores and disturbed our peace. They brought along a few planes with them but the highly efficient staff officers at the British War Office had forgotten to send the engines which appeared necessary. Hence the Royal Air force consisting of about ten officers and a dozen or so of mechanics proceeded to dig in and drink rum of which there was an ample supply of the real Jamaica brand. These flying officers without their planes were glad therefore to accept the reindeer sledges furnished by the O. C. Remounts (one Major F. J. Franklin) to transport them to their various points of call. Being winter at the time it was dark day and night so to while away the time the Royal Air Force played poker. I may also mention that the confines of the Air Force camp were loosely looked after. Garbage was thrown out in the snow.

Consequently brown bears descended on the camp and thrived exceedingly on the garbage. One day I was invited to dine with the officers of the air force. I dined on reindeer steaks which are delicious (although I knew full well the meat had been stolen by the air force from my reindeer). After dinner and a poker game I returned to my Kaplouska. It was snowing hard at the time. I left my fur coat under the box car as it was thick with snow and I did not want to get the floor of the box car wet. Climbing six wooden steps up the embankment I entered the car, lit with a match my one candle and observed what I took to be a bear skin robe on my bed. I figured that some kind Russian had donated me a bear skin during my absence. I caught hold of the robe. Suddenly the live bear sprang at me, caught my Sam Brown belt in its teeth and hung on. I made for the door, opened it and jumped six feet down into the snow; bear and all. The bear was more frightened than I was, and disappeared. Now comes the denouement. Next morning I went to feed my dog. My flashlight revealed the brown bear and my dog sleeping peacefully together. I have tamed the bear and I have photographs of my dog Kem and the brown bear. I still have the Sam Brown belt with the teeth marks of the bear on it.

Dogs and bears? Why, yes.

AND here's Dr. Cummings:

Several years ago my partner and myself packed back into the Trinity Mountains. We were out for pleasure and health. We found a stream that looked good for fishing, and a nice and dry place to camp, so we stretched out tents. One tent for sleeping and one for cooking and eating in.

We threw all the refuse from kitchen down the slope about twenty feet from the tent. The sixth day after we were in camp we heard something chomping like a hog eating. It was a bear. I have killed many bears in my fifty years hunting over the northern parts of California, but I have never killed one unless I wanted it for eating. So when the bear came into camp I just let the dog have his fun. The dog made for him and away they went. That same thing happened for six days, and then the dog would go down and watch the bear and in a few days they paid no attention to each other, and at the end of a month they were playing with each other. I would throw chunks of bread, etc., to the bear and he would pick them up and eat them. After it got dark the dog would go to the cook house and sit down and watch for the bear, which would not come until it got good and dark. When we left at the end of two months I looked back and the dog was standing on the rim looking down as much as to say, "I wish the bear was here so I could say good-bye to him."

H. J. BOEKELMAN, of New Orleans, Louisiana, sends an appeal to an audience he believes especially fitted to

help him in his vast scientific research. He wants shells and information about the uses of shells—read his letter.

Aside from a three months period, when the Commandante at Livingston, Guatemala, became so violently enamored of my private secretary that he most liberally proposed, in exchange for this young lady, two young Indian girls, and upon receiving a rather forcible public refusal to this offer promptly seized my schooner and threw us all in jail, upon a trumped up charge of smuggling, I have managed to keep buying and reading *Adventure*, I will admit, however, there were a few times when I thoughtfully contemplated the quarter, not quite certain whether to feed the physical man or the brain, but the latter usually won out.

When I was thirteen years of age a young lady happened to give me a bag of shells as a birthday present. Instead of throwing them away, I had to attempt their scientific classification, with the result of now having a collection of 60,000 specimens. Taking a friend to the American Museum of Natural History to show him a real collection of shells, what was my surprise to hear him say after a whole afternoon spent looking over the material that of all the useless studies he could imagine this appeared to him to take first prize.

When I decided to retire from business, it occurred to me to find out if shells really were as useless as they may appear to be to the average modern-day sophisticated mind. Books were examined by the thousands, a secretary hired and notes taken. After seven years' research I now find myself with 16,000 typewritten pages and 12,000 index cards, apparently only beginning the work, as considerable of my information is now coming in by word of mouth or letter, never having been published—but should be.

Far from being useless, I find that the deeper we delve into the past, the more prominent the rôle played by shells has been. Just the same as present-day children, if turned loose on a beach, will play with and treasure shells, so our primitive-minded cave-dwelling ancestors made use of shells in their everyday life. Only, in their case, aside from their practical use as food, clothing, and utensils, the rarer ones assumed to their minds a magical aspect, and were carried about as amulets and used in their religious rites. Thus we see millions of devout Hindus praying daily to the sacred chanc. The turnover of shells of the world now used as food and in manufacturing sums up to around $100,000,000 per annum. Likewise, many of our old family fortunes had their foundations laid in trading shells with primitive races, who eagerly exchanged their raw products for these their monetary standard, thus permitting profits of several thousand per cent to be made by such canny traders, before the bottom dropped out of the shell-market due to oversupply. You have but to remember the scallop shell, symbol of the Shell gasoline stations, and the name itself to find out what the basis was of this huge far-flung corporation (see Encyclopedia Britannica).

To complete this work, the life of one person is all too short, and although working often times eighteen hours daily and having spent $15,000 of my personal income, I require assistance in the sense of shell material and information, if I ever expect to lay a real foundation for future workers.

Adventure is read not only in steam-heated apartments and homes, but likewise in out-of-the-way kerosine-lit boats and houses all over the world. Both types of readers can help by supplying information, the first by sending in quotations found in books (almost every travel book contains such), the second as eye-witnesses, on the ground. Natives of Africa, China, Japan, India, the South Sea Islands, Central and South America, etc., still make use of shells for many purposes as yet unrecorded, and which due to encroaching civilization, is doomed to an early extinction. In such event science and human knowledge are the losers. Will not readers help by taking the few minutes necessary to send in any such information?

To such readers as are interested, I will send, as long as the limited supply lasts, a short paper I have written outlining in greater detail the use made by mankind of shells through the ages.

Will Camp-Fire readers help? If you forget the full name, Shells, Tulane University, New Orleans, will reach me. I thank you.

READERS will remember the little story about Genghis Kahn or Temujin, in which as a lad he escaped from enemies who held him under close guard and had locked round his neck a heavy plank—a sort of portable pillory from which he could not withdraw his head. A. W. Grooms, of Birmingham, Michigan, who has made a long study of Genghis Khan, writes us about that incident.

I have just read the story concerning Genghis Khan, written by William A. Anderson. Mr. Anderson has, I think, made several

errors in his article, and I believe the following will be found correct.

Genghis Khan was called Temujin as a boy and did not receive the title of Khan until many years later. As to the incident which Mr. Anderson mentions:

Temujin was guarded by a single warrior in a yurta of the Taidjuts. Taking the man by surprise in the night, Temujin knocked him senseless with a blow from the heavy kang which rested on his shoulders.

He fled to a nearby river, and hearing pursuers behind him, entered the water, hiding himself among the rushes till only his head was above water.

The searching party passed along the bank, and Temujin noticed that though one of the warriors saw him he did not cry out. He recognized this man as a stranger who had entered the camp that day, and later in the night, the boy left the river, crept to the yurta of this warrior, and implored him to remove the kang. This was done and Temujin hid in a cart of loose wool.

The Taidjut warriors came and searched the tent, and thrust spears into the wool, one of which wounded the boy in the leg. When they had gone the warrior gave the fugitive food and milk and a bow with two arrows, saying, "The smoke of my house would have vanished, and my fire would have died out forever had they found thee".

NOT much room this time for twenty-fifth anniversary number suggestions, but here are a few, and I wish also to acknowledge others by Bernard Barth, New York City; E. V. Hedgecoke, Peacock, Texas; R. A. Turner, East Moline, Illinois; J. R. Cuddihy, Great Kills, New York; E. Reid, Detroit, Michigan; Stanley Yelnek, Omaha, Nebraska.

I have been a steady reader for sixteen years now. For your anniversary number I suggest something by Bill Adams, Arthur O. Friel or Georges Surdez. Any one of those three can spin a real yarn.

I never get enough of Bill Adams. I suppose that's because I'll always be a sailor at heart. Even though my blue water days were in steam, I get most kick out of Bill's stories of the old clippers.

Melvin P. Van Cleave, Detroit, Michigan.

There was a series of stories a long-long-time ago with a hero by the name of Spider—it was Texas and Mexican. I'd like the final one in which he was killed in a fight against terrific odds.

E. S. Ferguson, Deland, Florida.

I remember there was a Dr. Cochrane who wrote Dan Wheeler stories and I would love to be able to re-read one. For years I looked to see if he was back with *Adventure* but either I missed him or he has disappeared into the unknown. Good luck to *Adventure* and may your anniversary include a Sled Wheeler.

Gladys Green, New York City.

I would like to have you reprint some of E. L. Wheeler's and Gordon Young's early stories as they were my favorite authors.

G. R. Haynes, Gardena, California.

If you are looking for some of your old stories that popped the eye out, dig up some of those old Tuttle stories of the high town of "Piperock."

M. D. Follin, Detroit, Michigan.

I have been reading *Adventure* for over twenty years, lots of the stories half a dozen times as good reading gets scarce up here in the woods, especially in winters when a fellow doesn't feel like making the twenty mile trip to town.

Some years ago some man who knew his stuff wrote a short story in *Adventure* called "The Luck of the Calf." It was about a ranger named Ike who sang about the "Old Lousy Calf, the Blizzard Can't Freeze Him As the Lice Keep Him Warm." This was a story to remember.

Then there was a long novelette "Toro of the Little People" and it was very good.

There was a real good short in the last issue called "Ol' Star." Better stories than those of "Kingi Bwana" in Africa are seldom written. Some years ago there was a story about a trapper named French Louie trapping wolves in Ontario, which was great.

Jesse H. Lively, Mancelona, Michigan.

We now plan to print the usual number of new stories in that November first issue—in other words, publish a regular edition of *Adventure*—and add a large extra section of the famous stories along the years. The magazine will be sold at the usual price.

Two reprints may be announced now—you will agree that no anniversary would be possible without them—and these are the Riley Grannan funeral sermon, and "The Soul of a Regiment," by Talbot Mundy. Other stories will be announced in Camp-Fire as the selections are made. H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

ZOUAVES and lancers: origin, function and history.

Request:—At the outbreak of the Civil War, I understand the North was ill prepared and knew very little regarding the rudiments of warfare. The advice of foreign military geniuses was sought (Austrian and French, I believe) and they strongly recommended the establishment of lancers in our cavalry. I have heard we did have cavalry armed with lances, but there is very little mention in history of their use in the Civil War. Apparently the lance was abandoned by our armies. The use of the lance was recommended by the Austrian military advisers, and I believe our Zouaves resulted from the French.

Please give me such information as you can regarding our adoption of the lance, whether it was ever tried out in a cavalry charge, what the result was and why and when its use in war was abandoned. Did the Confederates at any time equip their cavalry with lances?

Both sides had their Zouaves, I believe, but you can give me such information as you are able about them.

—WALES H. EVANS, Montclair, N. J.

Reply by Captain Glen R. Townsend:—While a popular weapon in European armies for several generations, and at times having strong advocates here, the cavalry lance has never been used to any extent in our service. The main reason, probably, has been the different conditions prevailing in Europe and here, and a different conception of the use of cavalry by our military leaders. The lance is essentially a weapon of shock action for use by cavalry in mass, against infantry. It is most effective when the infantry is demoralized or in retreat. The lance is of little value to cavalry on reconnaissance or screening missions, or on raids. Moreover, the employment against infantry demands suitable ground and much of our fighting on this continent has been done in the wilderness. These are, briefly, the reasons why the lance has never been used to any extent in our army.

The only extended trial of the lance in actual service was made by the 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry in the Civil War. This regiment, organized at Philadelphia in the summer of 1861, armed itself with the lance at the suggestion, it is said, of General McClellan. The pistol and saber were carried as well as the lance, however. Foreign military men then in the United States were consulted as to the model and the Austrian type, with some modifications, was adopted. The weapon provided was about nine feet long with an eleven-inch three-edged blade, the staff of Norway fir about one and three-quarters inches in diameter. The complete weapon weighed four pounds thirteen ounces.

This weapon was carried by the regiment with the Army of the Potomac for more than a year. In this period several detachments used it in action, but no opportunity was ever presented for its use in a massed charge and it was finally abandoned in favor of the weapons in general use by the cavalry on both sides, light carbines being added to the pistol and saber. The first recorded use of the lance in action by this regiment was on May 25, 1862, when Company C charged a Confederate cavalry picket near Hanover Court House, Va., and drove them back. At Gaines Mill late in June a few lancers took part in the charge of a cavalry force. In September, near Frederick, Md., Company A charged a larger force of Confederate cavalry which was dismounted at the time, and routed them.

This is the only instance of which I am aware when the lance was used in action by United States troops. It was not our first experience with it, however. Many of the

Mexican cavalry regiments were armed with the lance at the time of the Mexican War and our troops came to have considerable respect for their skill and efficiency. Since the World War, European armies have largely discarded the lance except for ceremonial purposes.

The history of the Zouaves in the United States parallels in many ways that of the lance. The idea of this type of organization was imported from France, which had obtained it about 1830 from certain Algerian mercenaries serving in the French army. They were members of a mountain tribe famous for the rapidity of their movements and their ferocity as fighters. Their uniforms of wide trousers, loose jacket and fez of brilliant colors were adopted by French regiments which also copied their rapid movements and skillful drill. The best known of these were the Chasseurs de Vincennes.

The idea was transplanted to the United States shortly before the Civil War. In 1858 a militia company at Rockford, Ill., took up the drill. This company known as the "Rockford Greys" became a part of the 11th Illinois Volunteers in 1861. Elmer E. Ellsworth, who had drilled the Rockford Greys, then developed a similar organization in Chicago, which gained a national reputation by a tour to all important cities of the country in 1860. Similar organizations sprang up rapidly and many of them were mustered into service upon the outbreak of war. Ellsworth was granted permission to raise a complete regiment of Zouaves for the service and recruited his unit wholly from the New York City fire department. This regiment left New York April 29, 1861, fourteen days after Lincoln's call for volunteers. It became the 11th New York Volunteer Infantry and gave good service throughout the war. Under the stress of field service, the colorful Zouave uniforms and its distinctive form of drill gave way to more practicable uniforms and training better adapted to the conditions of actual war. This was true of most similar organizations, though some retained the fanciful uniforms and drill for parade ground use. Incidentally, Ellsworth, the great exponent of the Zouave idea, was the first commissioned officer to fall in the Civil War. He was killed at Alexandria, Va., April 24, 1861.

By an act of the Confederate States Congress, approved May 4, 1861, the organization of a regiment of Zouaves of ten companies of about 100 men each was authorized. This regiment was organized and passed through much the same experiences as those of the Union army.

ARIZONA was a hot spot—a thousand years ago.

Request:—I worked on public land surveys in Arizona for two years, and in the region around Wicksberg, Bouse, Quartzite and south and southwest of Florence were numerous stretches of level ground, as if paved by a steam-roller, with small pebbles of hard, glistening, black or brown color malpais, in which no vegetation grew, although right along the edges I have seen thickets of creosote twelve feet high. Apparently this stuff is the same material as the hills and lava outcropping so numerous in the state, but the outcropping and hills are of fair-sized blocks. Also, if memory serves correctly, these areas are set off from the adjacent soil by extremely sharp lines not due to water action, and with little or no intermingling. Also, as far as I could determine by observation, none of these pebbles occurred in the washes of the country.

Can you tell me anything about the formation or explain its occurrence in that part of Arizona?

—Robert E. Depue, Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Gordon Gordon:—I have spent considerable time in checking with several University of Arizona geologists, and I find that these black or brown pebbles, which you described as covering considerable territory in some places, are basalt, which as you know is a form of lava. During the formative period in this part of the world, the basalt probably streamed through cracks in the earth's crust and covered stretches here and there in thin sheets. This layer, through the erosion of wind, weather and other natural factors, slowly cracked and disintegrated. In some places you can still see the sheets of basalt, where it is too thick to crumble. And occasionally you can find stretches which have been buried under considerable dirt and where vegetation is growing in the soil on top of the layer. Virtually no shrubs or plants, however, are found in areas where the lava is right on top of the ground.

The outcroppings on the hills, which you mentioned, are lava in the form that most laymen recognize—boulders of fair size.

From the viewpoint of volcanic activity, Arizona is an interesting state. As you know, there are numerous volcanoes, some of which were active as late as a thousand years ago. Scores of these are in the San Francisco mountains about Flagstaff. And between two

and three hundred craters have been found within a hundred-mile area south of Ajo, below the Mexican border. At one time, Arizona was literally a hot place. It was during this period, a good many thousands of years ago, that the basalt formations were laid.

SLOCUM, Pidgeon and Miles, lonely circumnavigators and adventurers.

Request:—It is my recollection that there has been at least one, and possibly more than one, circumnavigation of the globe by a small sailing vessel, manned by one man, unassisted and unaccompanied.

Can you tell me whether this is a fact, and, if so, give me the details?

—RICHARD A. GRANQUIST, Oak Park, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Charles Hall:—Offhand I recall three single-handed circumnavigations, those of Slocum, Pidgeon and Miles.

Captain Joshua Slocum, an old-time shipmaster, sailed from Boston in the *Spray* in 1895, sailing to Gibraltar, thence to South America and on through the Straits of Magellan, to Juan Fernandez, the Marquesas, Samoa, Fiji, Australia, across the Indian Ocean and around the Cape of Good Hope and over to South America and so on home, arriving in Newport in 1898, three years and two months later.

Harry Pidgeon built the *Islander* on the Pacific Coast and sailed to the westward with her, keeping going because he liked it. He rounded Good Hope and was blown ashore on the African coast north of Cape Town, getting off with little damage. He visited New York and spent a winter there, took part in a Bermuda race with a couple of members of the Cruising Club of America, came back here and finally went back to California via the Panama Canal.

Miles, I know little about. He built the *Sturdy* and got as far as the Red Sea, where she was burned. He came home, built *Sturdy II* and shipped her to the Suez Canal and went on from there, finally getting back to New York. I saw an interview with him about 1930 and he announced that he was going back to the farm to write a book about his voyage. But so far I haven't seen or heard of his book. Robinson, in *Svaap*, circumnavigated the world but was not alone all of the time.

There have been a number of Transatlantic voyages in small craft, some of them as small as seventeen feet long. See my story "Adventurers All," which ran in *Yachting* for several months in 1930, and Anthony's "Voyagers Unafraid," which covers a good deal of the same ground—or water.

FOX farming—an introduction to an arduous business.

Request:—I am planning to go to Alaska to take up fur farming, so I have come to you for advice. Having heard a lot about fur-raising in Alaska, I know it isn't a get-rich-quick idea. In New Hampshire I have raised rabbits and skunks with some degree of success.

How would one build kennels for raising foxes? What kind of food is best suited for them to bring out good quality fur? What are some of their common diseases and remedies? What is your dope on catching and killing the animals at pelting time when fur is prime? How old should an animal be when he is ready for pelting, taking into consideration the best price I could expect to receive for the fur?

I have read that fur raisers on the Coast have fed fish as the main food staple. Is this a good practice? How many pounds do you feed a day and how many times a day?

I understand that when two different kinds of fox are cross-bred, the cross-breeds bring a higher price on the market. Am I right?

Is there any other fur besides fox raised in Alaska that would offer profitable returns?

If you know of a good book on this subject, please let me know.

I am planning to locate on the east side of Cook's Inlet on the Kenai Peninsula.

—RICHARD PORTER, Moultonboro, N. H.

Reply by Mr. F. L. Bowden:—One of the prime requisites for a successful fur farm is a plentiful and an easily available food supply for your animals. It would appear that in the locality you have selected for your enterprise, the food supply would be your greatest problem. You would have to secure it yourself, and like any other kind of hunting, sometimes it is plentiful and sometimes scarce. But you can't explain that to a lot of hungry foxes.

Also most of the foxes raised in Alaska are either the white or the blue fox. I don't believe that the blacks, silvers, or cross would do so well there. Both the whites and the blues are arctic animals; as to how non-native animals would do there I do not know.

Believe it would be better for you to raise whites or blues, as your food problem would be less acute, and more of the natural food for these animals would be found in the immediate vicinity.

There are several ideas used in the construction of pens. I have never had any experience in construction so far north. This might be some problem there. I suggest that you write the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for their pamphlet on fox farming, as there are several plans for kennels in this leaflet, and you could select the one which seemed best to you.

As to food, many fox raisers are now using a prepared commercial food which works out very well. as this food contains all of the elements needed by the foxes, aside from either woodchucks or rabbits fed whole with the hair on. Horse meat is used successfully by some breeders, where there is a supply of this food available. Beef livers and lights are used by some. Some fish is fed. I would not recommend a straight diet of fish, however. It is not a balanced ration, and I doubt if first-class furs could be produced on this diet, as it "ain't the natur' of the baste."

Foxes are fairly healthy in captivity. Dysentery caused by dirty pens and feeding dishes and tainted food is one of the worst hazards. Keep 'em clean and you won't have to worry about this. Mange is another disease. Any good mange cure is the treatment for this. Both of these are highly contagious. Quarantine any suspected animal immediately to prevent spread of the trouble.

Many fox breeders now chloroform their animals at pelting time, but some breeders place the fox on its side (the right) and press with the knee just behind the left front leg and directly over the heart; this stops the heart action, killing painlessly and quickly and does not injure the pelt.

In regard to the amount of food to each animal this is something that you will have to work out for yourself; some animals need more than others. Feed once in the morning and again at about sun-down.

There are now several good books on fur farming. See advertisements in some of the magazines catering to trappers and fur breeders. The Department of Agriculture has several excellent pamphlets too.

WORLD WAR heroes: the victorious dogfighters.

Request:—Can you give the names and number of victories of the leading American flying aces during the World War? How many of them are still living.

—CHARLES SWEENY, Paris France.

Reply by Lieut. Falk Harmel:—The leading American "Aces" during the War credited with eight or more victories are:

Name	Planes	Victories Balloons	Total
Capt. Edw. V. Rickenbacker	21	4	25
Lt. Frank Luke*	4	14	18
Lt. George A. Vaughn	12	1	13
Capt. Field E. Kindley**	12		12
Capt. Elliott W. Springs	12		12
Capt. Reed G. Landis	9	1	10
Lt. David E. Putnam*	10		10
Capt. Jacques M. Swaab	10		10
Lt. Lloyd A. Hamilton*	6	3	9
Lt. Chester E. Wright	8	1	9
Lt. Paul F. Baer**	9		9
Capt. Frank O'D. Hunter	8		8
Capt. Thomas G. Cassady	8		8
Lt. Henry R. Clay, Jr.**	8		8
Capt. Hamilton Coolidge*	5	3	8
Lt. Jesse O. Creech	8		8
Capt. John Owen Donaldson**	8		8
Lt. William P. Erwin**	8		8
Lt. Clinton Jones	8		8
Major James A. Meissner	7	1	8
Lt. Wilbur Wallace White*	7	1	8

*Killed in action during the War.
**Died subsequent to the War.

IN dog derbies the huskies run four hundred miles in seventy-three hours.

Request:—How many dogs comprise a team for pulling a standard-size sled? What speed is obtained by the above? To what age do these dogs live? What are their real names. Here they are called Eskimo dogs. Are they called by the same name where you are?

—MORRIS KAPLAN, Philadelphia, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—The average *work* team of sledge dogs is comprised of from five to seven animals, though the number depends upon several factors such as weight of load, topography of country, condition of snow, etc. (Racing teams run from seven or nine animals to as high as eleven and thirteen animals.) The average team used for purely passenger service is usually about five animals.

In fact, a good heavy team of five dogs working over average terrain and condition of snow will haul a heavy sledge load sixty miles a day. With one passenger traveling on smooth ice the same team will cover a distance of one hundred miles a day with ease. Whereas, if the going is poor and snow soft with much hill work or brushy country, the same team may not average over a few miles in one day. Mail teams in Alaska on regular routes, where teams have seven to nine animals, make sixty to seventy miles a day without undue strain.

Bear in mind that the physical condition of the driver has an effect, as well as his handling of the team.

The original dog derby or All-Alaska Sweepstakes race from Nome to Candle and return, a distance of around four hundred miles, is usually run in around seventy-three to seventy-five hours. Seppala has made it in a bit over seventy-three hours. The Solomon Derby (Nome to Solomon River), distance sixty-four miles, a burden race of one passenger and fifty pounds extra, has been made in less than eight hours. Mail sledge loads are often eight hundred pounds and teams are of nine to as high as nineteen animals at times. Freighters try to make their working day eight to ten hours, but at times six hours seem best for the teams. A good driver knows how to save his team much fatigue.

The life span of domestic dogs is around eighteen to twenty years, where regular care and feeding and freedom from accident contribute to length of life. A work dog's life is less, and with a sledge dog various natural hazards shorten the span, so that perhaps twelve or fifteen years is likely.

The "Eskimo dog" is a straight wolf dog. In Alaska, we have the Eskimo dog which we call a "malamute, or husky," although these are of various types.

The Greenland husky is a big, heavy animal, weighing up to over one hundred pounds. Our Alaska huskies are a bit lighter, with an average weight of sixty to ninety pounds; whereas there is also a Siberian malamute here which is pure white in color and weighs but forty to sixty pounds. They are speedy animals and used much for racing teams.

In Alaska, we use almost any of the big long-haired dogs which are heavy enough to haul loads. The short-haired dogs, of course, cannot withstand low temperatures. These varieties of domestic dogs or cross-bred animals are all lumped under the general term, "husky." But the malamute is always of the Eskimo type, with more or less wolf strain, however distant it may be.

Colonel Samuel Colt's famous "belly gun" will sell for five dollars today.

Request:—I am writing you about an old Colt's cap and ball pistol. This pistol was given to me by an old friend just before his death a couple of years ago. It belonged to his uncle who was a Texas Ranger—Captain Bill Howard, I think his name was.

I would appreciate anything you can tell me about the date of manufacture and what the value of this gun is, if any.

It is well worn and the cylinder is engraved with a scene of a sea battle. Above the engraved scene is stamped "Engaged 16, May, 1843."

The cylinder has stamped on it "Colt's Patent No. 100." The rest of the gun is stamped 185100.

I was told this gun was carried as a saddle gun and as the end of the barrel is worn away on one side I suppose it was filed down so that it wouldn't cut through the holster. It has a silver front sight which is worn down to less than one-eighth of an inch.

—Wiley King, Oakland, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—I judge from your description that you have the .44 Army Colt, Model of 1860—a very popular type of the loose ammunition revolver, and one of the most popular Colts of its time.

Saterlee gives a total of 107,156 as being purchased by the Government for the troops during the Civil War; it's impossible at this time to say just how many more were sold privately. I know they have been found wherever I have been, I think. I have a couple near me now, one with the barrel sawed off to a length of a couple of inches, a real "belly-gun" of the old days and their gambling joints.

I doubt if the muzzle was filed off at the side; I feel positive it was worn that way by friction on a saddle, or even on the side of a trouser leg, the cloth probably pretty well filled with alkali grit, such as a plainsman would be apt to encounter as he rode. I've seen many such on these old Colts and revolvers of other make and that period.

As to its possible value, I can't say. Collectors will generally offer about five dollars. You might see the following firm: Far West Hobby Shop, 406 Clement Street, San Francisco, Calif. They are extensive dealers in old arms, and can quote prices.

Anyhow, I congratulate you upon the possession of a very interesting relic of the days when a good weapon was a necessity, as it's coming to be once again.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility.

No Reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure*.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, 250 Bronxville Rd., Bronxville, N. Y.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 161 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Coins: *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure*.

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Fishing: *salt and fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure*.

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose St., N. Y. C.

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS-BENJAMIN, 1177 East 15th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Health Building Activities, Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Horses: *care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting; jumping; and polo; horses of old and new West*—MAJOR THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1709 Berkley Ave., Pueblo, Calif.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., New York City.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 108 Winthrop Rd., Brookline, Mass.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Yosemite, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Oriental Magic and Effects—JULIEN PROSKAUER, 148 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 8, Box 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure*.

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 2436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Soccer—MR. BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure*.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 134 N. 4th St., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure*.

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachute gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Box 575, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure*.

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America. Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure*.

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3518 Tryon Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places, general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

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Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St, Fair Haven, N. J.

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U. S. Coast Guard—COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U.S.N. (ret.), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Florida.

U. S. Marine Corps—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R. F. D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, Calif.

World War: *strategy, tactics, leaders, armies, participants, historical and political background*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

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Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand; Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

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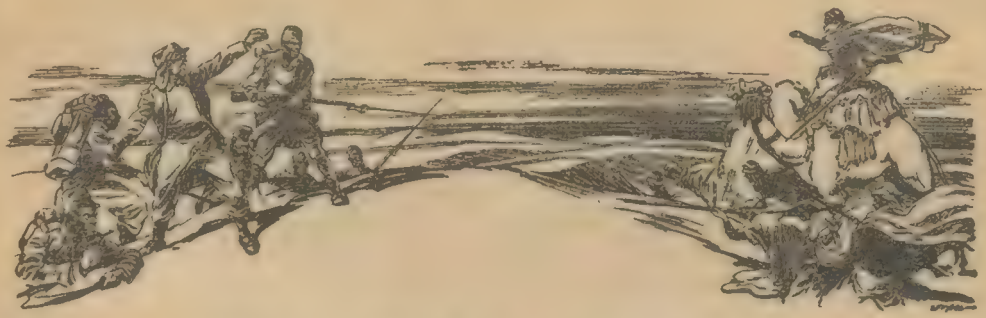

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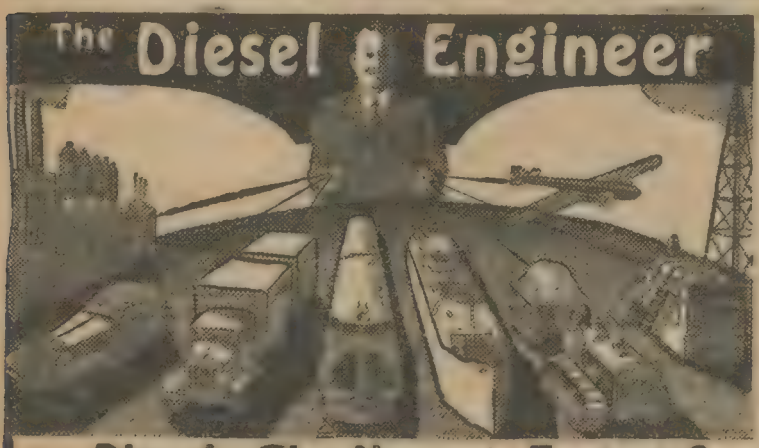

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